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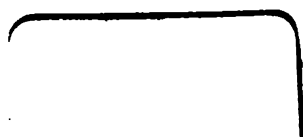
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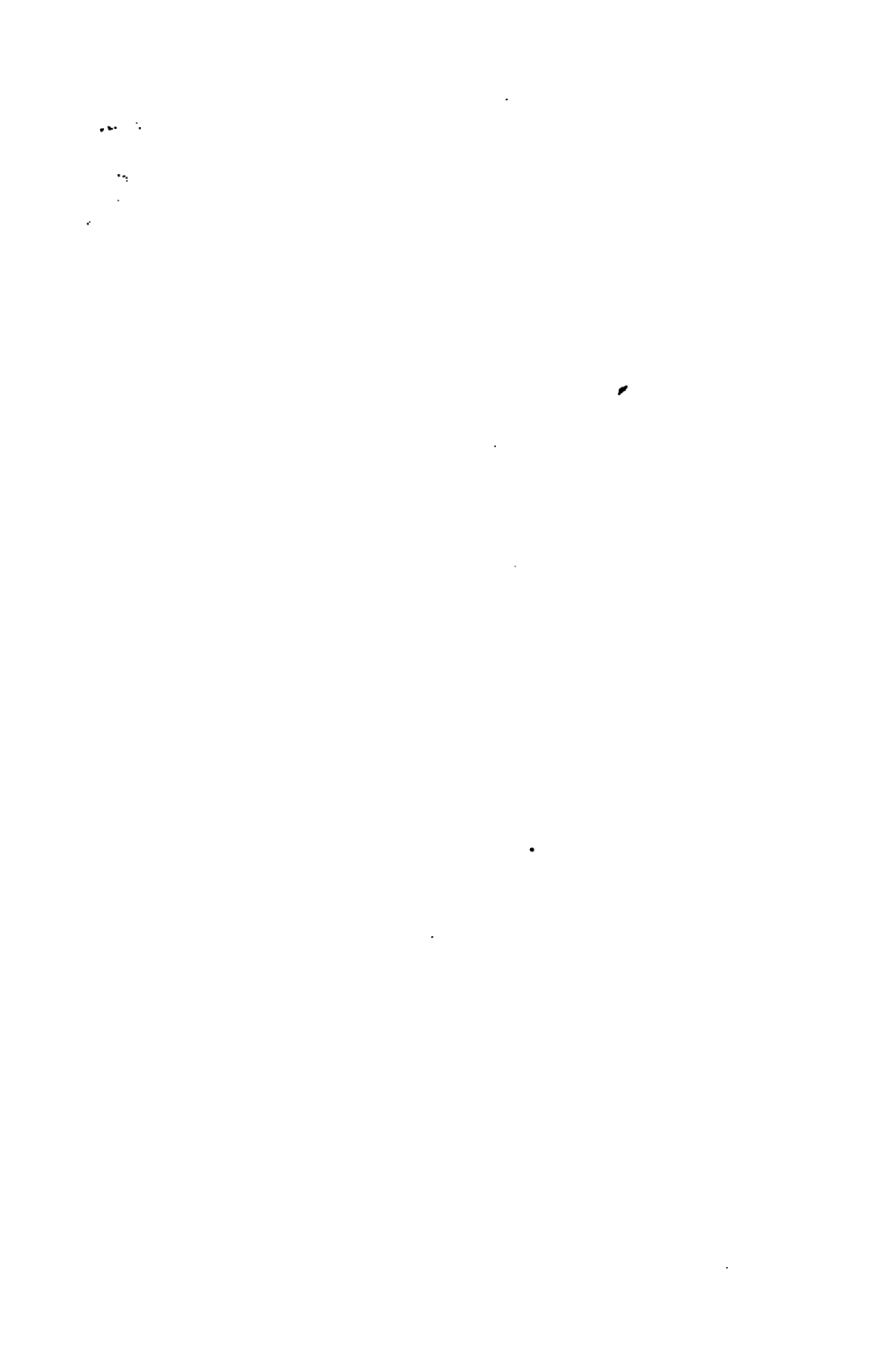
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CARR OF CARRLYON:

A Novel,

IN THREE VOLUMES.

BY

HAMILTON AÏDÉ,

AUTHOR OF "RITA," "CONFIDENCES," ETC.

"Visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children."—EXODUS xx. v. 5.

VOL. III.

LONDON:

SMITH, ELDER AND CO., 65, CORNHILL.

M.DCCC.LXII.

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250 f. 108.



CARR OF CARRLYON.

PART II,—*continued.*

VILLA FOSSOMBRONI.

CHAPTER XII.

HER ladyship eyed it with elevated brows. The cover was a blotted mass of directions and erasures; and the final address had been written on the reverse side, close to the seal. She turned it over two or three times, as though it might possibly contain some detonating powder, or subtle Medicean poison.

“Very odd! A hand I don’t know—followed me half over the world, apparently. Carrlyon.

and London, and Wiesbaden; and as to the *Italian* postmarks——”

The sentence remained unfinished. She had torn open the cover, and unfolded the large thin sheet of paper it contained. As her eyes fell on the first lines, she turned the letter hastily round to look for the signature. But apparently there was small satisfaction to be gained from this. Her brow was knit, and her cheek flushed through its rouge. The contents of that letter were exciting, it was clear; though whether painful or the reverse, it was difficult to decide.

At a sign from her mother, Gilda rose and followed her down into the garden below. They walked in silence until they reached the lower terrace, under the shadow of the mulberry-trees.

“Mother,” said Gilda, and her arm stole round the mother’s waist, “you look pale. What is the matter? Is it because that odious woman is so rude to us? I know we shall never be happy as long as she is here.”

“Don’t say that, darling; she is Carr’s mother, remember. No: whatever happens, dear—*what*—

ever happens, you must try and keep friends with her—do you hear, Gilda? You must consider *her* as your mother, now. Never mind me, dear, I am nervous and foolish; and the sight of a letter—you know how foolish I always was about letters. It is nothing. I am quite well.”

“She is *so* disagreeable,” sighed Gilda. “Do you think Laurence really likes her to be here?”

“It would be very unnatural if he didn’t. Remember that he has been accustomed from his infancy to those—peculiarities, which may strike us as disagreeable, and he does not see them, happily.”

“Yes, he does,” said Gilda, almost in a whisper; “he sees her manner to you, and to me too, and it annoys him; and she has said things against us, too: I know it. And that has made him so odd these last few days, mother; so very kind sometimes, and then——”

“Hush! Do you remember what I told you? I am never to hear anything against Laurence. That is the condition of my remaining with you, Gilda.”

"Ah! mother, what should I do without you?" said the young wife, as her head nestled on her mother's breast.

Lady Carrlyon had reached the bottom of the fourth page, while her son smoked his cigarette with the imperturbability proper to that relaxation. His eyes were riveted on the landscape before him: the slopes of vine and olive burning under the mid-day sun: the silver sheet of water that made the eyes ache if they rested there for a moment: the folds of mountain in a blue heat-haze beyond. He looked at this, or appeared to be looking, for, in reality, he lost none of his mother's movements. The letter she read evidently strangely affected her; though, when she had finished and laid it down, it would have been difficult to say whether the expression on those usually vapid features was that of wrathful or pleasurable agitation.

"What is the matter? No bad news, I hope?"

"Oh! it's only what I expected all along!" exclaimed Lady Carrlyon, in an hysterical voice. "I was sure of it; I said I remembered her face;

I knew there was something dreadful about her, and now you'll believe me another time. It's shameful! it's scandalous, that such women should be allowed to—to—— You've been regularly *caught*—yes—caught by a low, designing creature—you wretched, silly boy: and all because you wouldn't listen to your mother! However, I should hope it wouldn't be difficult to get you a divorce, if ——”

“Are you gone raving mad?” cried Carr, starting up, and bringing his fist down upon the table, with a force that made the coffee-cups clatter. “What on earth are you talking about?”

“I'm talking about this letter, and you'd better read it,” retorted his mother, indignantly; “and then you'll be able to judge whether I'm mad—I'm sure it's enough to make one so.”

He snatched the letter with a trembling hand, and read as follows:—

“MADAM,

“THE writer of these lines is unknown to you. In the communication he is about to make

he is solely prompted by his interest and pity for your son, and, he may add, by a sincere desire to avert the heavy calamity he sees impending over a noble family. That the circumstance of your son's marriage caused you much grief and surprise is no secret to the writer. How greatly would the anxiety of a mother's heart have been augmented had the real name and position of the family to which your son had allied himself been known to you! But that knowledge was cautiously concealed, even from your son, whose high sense of honour would naturally have shrunk from staining the spotless purity of an ancient name by such an alliance. It now becomes a painful but necessary duty to open your eyes as to these facts.

"The name of Henry Dunstanley is probably not wholly unknown to you, madam. Though more than twenty years have elapsed since that brilliant and successful man was the idol of those *salons* which you still adorn, you will not have forgotten him completely. His notorious successes with the fair sex rendered him, more than any-

thing else, perhaps, the most fashionable man of his day. The circumstance which brought this career of triumph abruptly to a close will not have escaped you, though many a page has been added to the chronicles of fashionable vice since then. The elopement of Lady Mary Caliston, and her young husband's death in the duel he fought with Mr. Dunstanley, made much noise at the time. Caliston was his wife's first cousin, and the same age as herself—endowed with remarkable beauty, judging from a portrait which the writer of these lines has seen. Yet these attractions did not preserve his wife's affections (if, indeed, they ever were her husband's, and not made the mask for a mercenary marriage), nor could they secure her fidelity against the seductions of a man many years older than herself, corrupt in heart and mind, and who had only shortly before deserted the woman who *should* have been his wife.

“The execration which followed this *murder*—for it was nothing less,—the cool, accomplished duellist pitted against an inexperienced youth, frenzied with the remembrance of his wrongs—

the universal execration not less than the law obliged the wretched partners in crime to fly the country, and to change their name. Thenceforward, the ambitious career of Henry Dunstanley was at an end. The politician and man of letters was heard of no more: and his brilliant conversation was quoted as a thing of the past. In obscure parts of France and Italy it was understood that a miserable man, broken down in constitution, was dwelling in the closest seclusion, feeling that the brand of Cain was upon him, and shunning his countrymen, whenever any rare chance brought them in his way. A few months only after this man's marriage, a child was born to him. *The fruit of that adulterous connection is your son's wife.*

“You will no doubt find in this fact a sufficient reason for the indecent haste with which the future Lady Carrlyon's marriage was concluded. But there was another motive to which the writer of these lines would direct your particular attention. The young lady was in love with another man, to whom it was impossible she should be

united. As *danger* might have ensued from the continuance of such an intimacy, it was doubly necessary to dispose of her at once. Now, madam, in pointing out to you that the child of Lady Mary Dunstanley has married your son, without entertaining the smallest particle of affection for him, but was urged thereto by her parents, while her heart secretly was given to another, you will perceive there is some ground for alarm that her future conduct may emulate her notorious mamma's somewhat too closely. Like her, she has married the most attractive of men from unworthy motives: like her, she is still under the influence of *another and fatal fascination*. In support of this assertion it may be stated that she lately induced her unsuspecting husband to go to Peschiera, in order that she might visit her lover in the hospital there!

“Your son has been duped, madam, and the family name disgraced. You would not wish its honour to be yet further tarnished by any open scandal. To avert such a calamity you must persuade your son to withdraw his wife from the

fatal associations by which she is surrounded. Take her to England—away from her misguided mother—away, too, from the dangerous proximity of one who shall be nameless. The bracing air there may strengthen principles already weakened by the soft seductive climate of Italy.

“May your daughter-in-law be spared, madam, to become the mother of a *legitimate heir* to the House of Carrlyon, is the hope of

“Your ladyship’s most obedient

“UNKNOWN FRIEND.”

Carr was pale as a sheet. He said nothing for some moments, but crushed the letter in his hand and flung it on the table.

“You don’t suppose,” he said, in a hoarse voice, at last, “that I am so degraded as to listen to the accusations of an anonymous correspondent. Of all the mean, cowardly——”

“That’s all very well,” replied the lady, tartly, “but I have my own reasons for believing them; and as the truth of the story is very easily proved by questioning this—this woman (what-

ever you please to call her), if *you* don't choose to do it, I shall."

"I insist, mother, on your doing nothing of the sort. Mrs. Courteney shall not be insulted whilst she is in my house."

He stopped short, and turned away. What if it *were* true? In that one moment numberless circumstances came crowding on his mind, which might seem to corroborate this horrible story. The blood tingled through all his veins at the humiliating thought that his mother's words might in some sort be confirmed. If there were any foundation for this, then indeed had he been dealt with most unworthily.

He said after a pause—

"I will speak to her myself. As you are so prejudiced, it is but fair that Mrs. Courteney should have an opportunity of clearing away these suspicions—of replying to these slanders, for such I believe them to be. You shall be amply satisfied, moreover, that what this anonymous letter informs you of my wife is false." His voice quivered, but he went on: "I say it

is *false*, and if I were not sure it was so, I would——”

“What would you do?”

“No matter. We will leave the subject of my wife, if you please. That is a point that only concerns herself and me. Promise me not to breathe a word of this to her or to her mother before I speak to Mrs. Courteney.”

“Well, you always were romantic! If there is any truth in the story, I should have said it would bring your wife to a proper sense of her position letting her know it, and prove a *warning* to her—but it’s as you like—only I know what your interview with that woman will be. She’ll get round you, and manage to make you believe her innocent, which you’re quite inclined to do, if it was only to prove that *I’m* wrong.”

“You shall be present,” said Carr, after a pause. “You shall hear her denial from her own lips, provided you will promise to take no part in the interview. And whatever be the result, remember, I will have Gilda remain in ignorance of this painful subject.”

Fortune favoured his design; for Mrs. Courteney ascended the steps of the loggia at the same moment, and alone. Gilda's white dress was discernible, seated in the shadow of the mulberry-trees. The moment was not to be lost, Carr took his mother-in-law's hand, as she was turning silently, and without raising her eyes, towards her own room, and led her into the *salotto*, to the right.

Lady Carrlyon followed.

"I have only a word to say—a question to ask, nothing more," and he laid the letter open on the table before her.

Her face contracted with a sharp sudden spasm, and the thin hand trembled violently on the chair where it leant for support.

"Do you know this handwriting?" he continued, in a gentle voice, "and if so, have you any secret enemy?"

She pressed her hand to her heart: her white lips moved, but no sound came; she oscillated to and fro for a moment, and fell back upon the floor, insensible.

Carr ran forward, and took her up in his arms. He was horrified at what he had done. He thought she was dead.

"Call one of the Italian women," said his mother, quietly. "She has only fainted."

Her ladyship did not attempt to offer any assistance herself, but as Marietta ran in, she continued,—

"Tell her to cut her mistress's laces. She must be dreadfully tight with that waist. Well, Laurence, this is a very convenient way of answering any awkward questions; but I trust you will not be weak enough——"

She stopped at an impatient sign from her son. The unhappy lady slowly opened her eyes under the effect of the restoratives administered to her, and was half led, half carried by Carr to her own room. Before he left her, she had contrived faintly to whisper a message to her daughter, which he delivered at once. Her mother was not quite well, but desired to be left alone and undisturbed for some hours.

"Your eyes must be open, my poor boy," exclaimed Lady Carrylon, when she met her son returning, with a gloomy air, to the house. "Your eyes must be opened by that wretched woman's manner, and of course I needn't tell you that the very first thing to be done is to separate her from your wife at once. Of course she'll trump up some story now she's *prepared* for it; but you understand, Carr, that *I* shan't believe it; and if you let her remain here, you must choose between her and your own mother, as I couldn't possibly compromise myself by remaining in the house with her."

There was a bitterness in Carr's heart at finding himself deceived—at finding the woman he had implicitly trusted and regarded as a model of matronly virtue no better than the rest of her sex—which held him silent. He could find no words wherewith to answer his mother. He *had* been deceived; there could be no doubt about it, and his wife—no, he would not think of that. He would not admit the very faintest suspicion of her, and yet, like some

hateful insect, it buzzed round, asking for admittance.

He turned his head away, and leant against a column of the loggia. His mother, delighted at this silent testimony to her triumphant arguments, proceeded, with a show of magnanimity—

“Bad as it is, however, my dear boy, and much as I feel for you, we must remember it *might* have been worse. She’s got blood. I remember all about her now. Lady Mary Caliston — daughter of Lord Grandon’s—title didn’t go out of the direct line, and became extinct on the death of her father, forty years ago—married her cousin, Mr. Caliston. I’ve been trying to think where it was I saw her a few nights before she ran away. I never knew her, but she went everywhere, and the thing made a great noise at the time. Of course she’s a shockingly immoral person, and I hope I’m too highly principled to countenance her for a moment—quite out of the pale—still, you know, it’s a great thing that she’s got blood.”

“She has enough of it on her unhappy head,

if this be true," replied her son, with something between sigh and sarcasm.

Two or three hours later a message came to Carr to say Mrs. Courteney wished to see him. He found her sitting before her open desk; that desk which was the remote cause of so much misery! Opposite her hung the Madonna and infant Christ, towards whom the worn, tearless eyes were turned from time to time; but she was calm, and showed little traces of the emotion which had so lately overpowered her, save in her extreme paleness.

The course of tonics and bitters which Carr had been undergoing from his mother in the interim, had produced, as usual with him, an entirely opposite effect. He was a weak man, if you will, but time generally altered his views, and after the first wrath had passed away his kind heart softened towards the unhappy lady; all the more from his mother's heartless and vulgar diatribes. His indignation was directed solely against the memory of the deceased man. As he entered his mother-in-law's room, Carr

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went up at once and took her hand with more than his usual kindness of manner.

She did not look up, but silently returned its pressure.

"Will you let me see the letter, Laurence? You need not be afraid of my fainting now. The worst that could happen to me is over, and I knew, ah! yes, I knew that it must come sooner or later."

He laid the letter before her, and turned to the window. He watched one particular fly, a helpless creature struggling in a web which a spider had cunningly suspended across the pane. "It is a futile effort, poor thing!" he said to himself; "there is no extricating yourself, on turning back, no redemption possible from that voracious spider's maw, unless I break your web?" and as he passed his hand across the silver threads there was probably more in his mind than the liberation of a fly.

He heard her sigh heavily, and turned round. She had finished the letter, and sat leaning her head upon her hand.

"Who is your secret enemy?" he asked.

"God forgive her! an unhappy woman. She has ill-requited me, but let that pass. I do not judge her—who am I that I should judge any one? So far as what concerns me she has but told you what *I* would have told you long and long ago, if I might. But oh, my poor child—my Gilda she has cruelly wronged! Believe me as if I were on my death-bed, Laurence, all that this letter contains about your wife is false—utterly false. *She* at least had no concealments from you. Before she consented to marry you she told you all. Let no one ever induce you to believe otherwise. She knows nothing—may she never know it, Laurence—of the fearful past. She told you her *own* past, the dream of her early girlhood, and she told you the truth when she said it *was* past and for ever. Can any one who looks at her doubt her pure and guiltless nature? The day you do so, Laurence, you will rue it—yes! rue it all your life."

She stopped to gather breath; then continued, after a pause, in a tone of ineffable sadness:

“It is this bows me to the dust, that my poor innocent child should still be reaping the fruits of my sin! God knows that sin is ever before me, as David says. It has pursued me relentlessly these twenty years; I might fly the world and change my name, but there it was, in my own home, gnawing at my vitals—a living remorse in him, a growing disgrace in her, my child, until—until I have been tempted to think there was no forgiveness of sins, as *he*, alas! my husband, believed. I confounded the world’s code with God’s in those days, but I know now,” she added, looking up at the picture of the infant Christ, “that however long, and justly I may suffer here, there is One above who forgave a sinful woman like myself when He was upon earth, and who will not utterly banish me from His presence hereafter. It is only for my child—my poor child, God forgive me! that my heart rebels. It is the old Mosaic law, not the Christian, this visiting the father’s sins upon the children! Courteney felt it: he knew the world’s code too well, and therefore it was

he acted on that fatal error that in order to secure our child's future it was essential to conceal the past! Alas! alas! Laurence, how often have I knelt down and besought him to tell you all. No man, he said, would knowingly marry the daughter of Henry Dunstanley and Mary Caliston."

"And do *you* believe that if he had told me all I should have retracted? The only thing I can't get over is the deception. It was giving my people a right to say I had been *taken in*. The word is a hard one, Mrs. Courteney, but had I taken the step with my eyes open, as I most assuredly should have done, the world could never have dared lift a finger. Your husband did a great wrong to me and to Gilda at the same time, when he deprived me of the power of proving that my love was stronger—far stronger than the world's prejudice."

"I know it, Laurence; and I have felt your reproaches daily—hourly—all these months while they were yet unconceived by you. Do you remember a promise *he* extracted from you? I attached but little value to the words myself. He

maintained, however, that you could not complain of having been deceived, should you ever learn the truth after making that promise."

"It is true ; I perfectly recall it," replied Carr, with more bitterness than he had yet displayed ; "and I cannot but admire the astuteness which dictated it at such a moment. It would have been still more refined cunning, however, to have made me a partner in the plot, so to speak. The discovery has come so suddenly, that I could not even pretend to be well informed on the subject beforehand. Pardon me, I do not blame *you*, Mrs. Courteney ; there are subjects upon which it is hard for any woman to speak."

"He made me *swear* I would not. Need I tell you, Laurence, that he always did with me as he liked ? That for years and years my sense of right too often gave way to him ? His word was law ; he never changed. I seldom ventured to argue a point with him ; yet on this one I never ceased to do so. It was all to no effect. He said our secret concerned no one but ourselves ; we were not called upon to cloud our

child's future. Alas! I knew what such arguments were worth; but he was ill—dying, as he knew himself, and as I tried not to see—and oh, Laurence, these discussions irritated him against me, and aggravated his own suffering; and I had not the—the courage to speak, when I thought what the consequences might be to him.”

“I repeat, Mrs. Courteney, I do not blame you. It was very natural, and I am as anxious as you can be that Gilda should be kept in ignorance of all this. I have made my mother promise not to allude to the subject, and my care shall be to keep it from her.”

A momentary shiver ran through Mrs. Courteney's frame.

“Thanks for that. It would indeed be cruel to do otherwise, for the blow would be a heavy one to her, who has lived hitherto believing her mother to be spotless! Let her believe it still, dear Laurence, when I am gone. It is bitter to think of one's child despising one—and I shall depart almost happy if I know that she cherishes my memory unaltered.

Carr felt sorely perplexed. She meant to leave them, and his heart prompted his urging her to stay. On the other hand, could he turn his mother out of doors, for so it would virtually be doing? For her to remain, with the knowledge she possessed, even if she consented to do so, would be to expose his wife and her mother to intolerable insolence, while she might, and no doubt would, cause endless mischief with his father if, she departed now in wrath.

“Why should you leave us?” he said at last, abruptly. “*I don’t want you to go; my mother will be returning very soon to England, and——*”

“Stop, dear Laurence, do not say anything more. I thank you sincerely, but my mind is quite made up; I ought not to have come here at all, still less should I have remained here with Lady Carrlyon. It was weak, foolish, selfish. I ought to have remembered his injunctions, so often repeated, never to darken my child’s path after she was married. Her future in your family depends on our being separated. Your mother does not love Gilda now: in time

she cannot help doing so. It is much better for my child's ultimate welfare that Lady Carrlyon should be here; I would not have it otherwise: but *my* place is distinctly *not* here, and I must go—go, at once while I have courage and strength to tear myself from my child."

"But where are you going?" said he, helplessly, "and what pretext do you mean to give for your sudden departure?"

"I can tell Gilda some part of the truth," she replied, with a slight flush. "Your mother's presence here renders mine undesirable."

Carr walked to the window and looked out.

"We shall miss you very much; your presence has been often of great service: never a nuisance and a bore. But I suppose you are right, and that for the present we must let you go. Gilda will lose a wise mother's advice, and *my* mother can't supply that, as you know. Gilda will have a difficult part to play. My mother's prejudices are strong—they will be stronger now: there's no concealing it. I have had moments of jealousy, I shall have them again, Mrs. Courteney;

but I swear to you that I trust your daughter; that I love her more than when I married, and that I will never allow a word to be breathed against her from—from what is past. I think," he added naïvely, "that she loves me better than when we married? Don't you?"

"She does; and it rests with you, Laurence, to raise and strengthen that bond, or to lower it into one of duty only. God act by you, as you treat her! Remember that cold suspicion is far worse to a sensitive nature than actual unkindness; and without confidence, no true love can exist."

CHAPTER XIII.

HER arrangements were already made. A diligence which passed at the foot of the hill in the early morning would take her to Peschiera—thence she would get to Venice. One place was much like another to the forlorn woman. The facility of access, and the circumstance of the siege, decided her. She would find plenty of work for her hands there, and little leisure to sit down and think. This part of her task was easily accomplished: a harder portion of it yet remained behind.

The swift Italian twilight was closing round when she sent for her daughter. It was far, far into the night when they parted. Prostrate on her knees before her mother, at one moment imploring her, with passionate vehemence, not to

abandon her ; the next, more calm and self-contained, trying to arm the young heart to face its future bravely, Gilda passed hour after hour of the summer night. Unexpressed, the thought lay cold and heavy as a stone at the heart of both mother and child, that those golden moments, so swiftly winged, might be the last they should ever spend on earth together.

“Mother,” whispered Gilda, after a pause, in a low fluttering voice, “if—if—I should have a child, will you not promise to come to me in my hour of trouble?”

The poor mother’s heart was wrung with anguish, and it was only after a violent effort that she was able to reply : “I cannot promise, darling, for God may will it otherwise. If He should permit me to return to you, then I will do so, but circumstances may prevent it. This is no longer my place, as I have told you, dear child, and I must never dispute it; but you know that my spirit will be constantly with you, and this no one can prevent. You will write to me often and fully, about all that most closely concerns you,—

except your husband. What passes between you and him should be close locked away: and, unless in some dire necessity, I implore you to make no confidences on this subject to *any one*. All your other difficulties or sorrows—and there must be some in every human life—you shall pour out to me: but upon any connected with Laurence, say nothing, dear. The habit of repeating, still more of setting down on paper the feelings of the moment, often raises into importance circumstances which would otherwise die out of the memory completely. Regard it as a matter of honour to keep his short-comings hid from every eye. It will make you a happier woman, and it will draw you closer to your husband every year. Let nothing come between you two, neither father, nor mother, nor friend. And as to me, my darling, I shall be happy in the reflection of your happiness, and if I should not be near you in the body, yet surely we shall in spirit be even closer to each other than if I were here, and that a shadow grew up between us: not from your loving me less, but because you would see your

husband by degrees estranged from his own family, and ——”

“Yes!” interrupted Gilda, through her tears. “It is all that horrid woman—I know it. It is of no use telling me, dear mother, to try and love her, I cant. I never shall. And as to her supplying your place, it’s dreadful, mother, to talk of such a thing. I don’t believe that Laurence himself wishes her to be here, and I *do* believe that he honours and reveres and loves you ——”

“No, no,” said Mrs. Courteney, with a tremulous voice. “Not so, my child; Laurence is very good to me, very good and kind and indulgent, but he has no reason to think thus of me. He is not my own son, remember: and though he urges me now to stay, he sees the wisdom of my going, and he will feel it more and more when I am gone.”

There was a long pause. Gilda slowly dried her eyes, and lay with her head in her mother’s hands, like a little child.

“I feel grown so old,” she said at last, “so old, you can’t tell, mother, within these few months

past. It seems years and years ago since I was gay and light-hearted. I cannot tell why, but I find no longer the same keen pleasure I used in everything. It makes me *so* weary now to look forward to a long life—unless I may have a child,” she added, in a low voice. “Without you to talk to, to nestle my head in your bosom, I shall grow morose and crabbed, I believe. When I am with Lady Carriyon, do you know, mother, I feel so inclined to contradict everything she says. It is very wrong, but I can’t help it; I know we shall never agree. Her very laugh irritates me.”

“You will never forget that she is your husband’s mother, Gilda.”

“Laurence is very kind—kind and indulgent, mother,” continued the young wife, musingly, “but——”

“Remember the lesson I have just been reading, my darling,” said Mrs. Courteney, gently, “when your old mother is no longer by to prose to you.”

“I shall forget nothing you say, mother; and I shall try and do my duty faithfully. But——” she hesitated a moment, “I don’t think Laurence

understands me. I doubt whether I am capable of ever making him very happy. I don't say this is his fault. No doubt it is mine. But when you spoke just now of—of married life, I couldn't help thinking how difficult it was, dear mother, and how different from—from—what—I 'once fancied it——”

“Stop! my darling. Difficult it is for all of us, this life; but recurring to any dreams of the past is worse than useless. For God's sake, don't fall into that dangerous habit. Don't expect this life to be a path of roses: rather tread cautiously, as one who knows that thorns beset him on every side. You have married an upright man who, I believe, is firmly attached to you. He has his faults—his weaknesses—we all have. Make it your study to subdue and soften them, if possible. Don't trust your impulses—good and generous though they generally are—for there are some natures that resent impulse. In short, my darling,” added the mother, with a sad little smile, as she tenderly kissed her daughter's forehead, “all my advice may be summed up in

bidding you grow *old*, as you say you feel yourself doing—old, and sedate, and prudent, for you have still the lingerings of the child about you.”

The young wife shook her head. There was something her mother did not or would not see, but she said no more. Why embitter those last hours they were to pass together with further sorrow and anxiety?

The first streak of dawn was in the east, and the dark blue of the sky had grown many shades paler ere the mother could persuade her daughter to tear herself from her arms. She was to be up in the morning to see her mother off of course, but this was the last time they would probably be alone and undisturbed. It was a sad hour, though few words were spoken, for the hearts of both women were full; but as they wrenched themselves asunder from that last embrace, it was almost with the quivering tenderness of the flesh when parted by the surgeon's knife.

And it *was* the last: for Mrs. Courteney, in order to spare her daughter a repetition of that

scene, antedated her departure a couple of hours; and when Gilda returned to her mother's room at the appointed hour, there was nothing left but a few shreds of paper, and a black riband from her mother's dress.

CHAPTER XIV.

I HAVE seen portions of Lady Carrlyon's correspondence written and received during the next few days. It is unnecessary to reproduce her letters here, though the tone of exultation, and the undisguised hope that she has succeeded in the first step towards freeing her son, are eminently characteristic of the woman. On the other hand the accounts of her lord's health alarmed her. Not that she had any sudden fit of tenderness or remorse on her husband's account. She did not hurry her departure, or express the smallest uneasiness at being away from him. And yet she *was* uneasy. If he died at this inopportune juncture, it would disarrange all her plans. Carr would take possession of his property, and his wife—Lady Carrlyon—would be at once received as such.

Over and above the annoyance of becoming "dowager," was the aggravation of being deposed by such a successor. Her ladyship shed some honest tears on the subject; which enabled Mrs. Timson to state that it was beautiful how m' lady took on, when she was alone, about m' lord's illness. And as no one was in a position to contradict this, it went to swell the number of fables out of which history is compiled.

There is a Latin proverb to the effect that our reputation is in the hands of our servants—*omnis fama a domesticis emanat*—which is not as incompatible as it may appear at first with the modern one—that no man is a hero to his valet-de-chambre. For though our valets-de-chambre know us to be no heroes, it is clearly their interest to make us appear such in the eyes of the world. They derive a borrowed lustre from our fame. Thus Mrs. Timson, who knew her mistress far better than, I am thankful to say, we shall any of us ever do, was never weary of proclaiming that her ladyship was the greatest, the most

generous, the most amiable, and most ill-used of England's noblewomen.

Lady Carrlyon's manner towards her daughter-in-law was singularly gracious during this period. She paraded her condescension somewhat ostentatiously before Carr, it is true, but even in private she restrained the *hauteur* which had marked her intercourse with Gilda heretofore. It was, no doubt, the most narrow-minded prejudice which prevented this change being duly appreciated. Gilda felt a greater repugnance than ever towards her, and in proportion as the elder lady advanced, the younger one shrank back into rigid and freezing courtesy.

The Italian arms in the meantime had suffered several reverses, and the indecision which characterized Charles Albert's movements filled more energetic natures with apprehension for the future. The capitulation of Vicenza had been followed by that of Padua, Treviso, and other towns, until the whole of Venetia, with the exception of Venice itself and Osopo, was once again in the hands of the Austrians. The gloom

thus cast over the Italian cause had, indeed, been dispelled for the moment by certain brilliant passages of arms. At Corona, near Rivoli, Pignerol's brigade, with a company of Turin students, defeated thrice the number of Imperialists, and drove them back at the point of the bayonet. The taking of Governolo by General Bava was another achievement which raised the spirits of the patriots. But it was felt by the keener-sighted that a position must be desperate which caused trivial successes such as these to be considered important.

One division of the Piedmontese army held positions stretching from above Rivoli as far as Sommacampagna. A reserve occupied Peschiera, Pozzolengo, and other small towns in the vicinity of the Lago di Garda. The whole country was alive with patrols, videttes, and parties of skirmishers, thickly sown among the vines, and mulberries and olives.

Carr was out a great part of each day now, riding to one or other of the nearer posts, with occasionally a long excursion across the hills to

verify some flying rumour of the Austrians' advance. A boy with a second horse or mule laden with fowls, eggs, and butter, generally accompanied him in his visits to the meagrely-provisioned camp; rendering them, no doubt, doubly acceptable thereby.

The fact is, Carr was in that frame of mind which demands energetic employment for both mind and body. Most men's natures suffer deterioration without the constant and irksome stimulant of a profession; and it will have been seen that Carr's had done so. What might have been only specks had grown into unsightly excrescences, deforming much that was good. At this moment he was stung by secret doubts and disquietudes at which his better nature revolted, but which, in spite of all he had said to Mrs. Courteney and to himself, would not be crushed or driven away. It is the property of such minds as his, with only a partial capacity for what is great and noble, that their doubts feed themselves, pelican-wise, from their own breast. A life of inaction, the

absence of healthy and continuous exertion (healthy for the mind, that is to say, under nearly every condition), tends more than anything to the growth of such habits. The current of thought, instead of flowing vigorously in a broad straight channel, is stopped by every creek and shallow in its sluggish course. Are these truisms? It behoves us to recall them when we wish to measure justice to a man like Carr.

And in measuring justice let us not forget that he fought manfully against his irritable and suspicious frame of mind. These hard and early rides across the burning plain and mountain, with just a spice of danger to flavour the adventure, were not unsuccessful. The days he remained at home he was almost invariably gloomy and depressed; while, on the other hand, he seldom returned from one of his long excursions but with heightened spirits. Even when things were going ill with the Italians there was always some anecdote of heroism to be enthusiastic about, or some good story against the

Austrians to be laughed over, which the presence of Lady Carrlyon, it is to be feared, robbed of no particle of its zest.

As a matter of course there was daily expostulation from Lady Carrlyon on the subject of her son's visits to "the rebels," as she was pleased to term them. And as a matter of course, Carr disregarded these expostulations, and went all the more from the fact of his mother's presence at the villa. Gilda was the principal sufferer for obvious reasons; but then Gilda was an ardent Italian, eager to learn the last news of the patriots, and ever urgent on her husband to befriend them. She had no right to complain. Moreover, the habits of the country permitted her, at this season, to pass the greater part of the day in her own room. Both ladies were supposed to take *sieste* of unlimited duration in darkened rooms with hermetically sealed windows; and Gilda thus avoided every opportunity of a *tête-à-tête* with her mother-in-law when she could.

The marchesa was still at her aunt's villa, and of the former lady our friends saw a good deal.

The reasons she assigned for lingering on varied every other day; which might have puzzled any one sufficiently ignorant of, yet interested in, the fair Italian to feel puzzled about her. But Carr knew, and his mother knew perfectly well, that the Piedmontese cousin's non-appearance was the reason; and if Gilda was dull of apprehension, why, perhaps it was to be attributed to the fact that she did not trouble her head about the matter. She accepted all the Italian chose to tell her in perfect good faith, which not unnaturally roused the scorn of her mother-in-law. "Those airs of *petite ingénue* are so very absurd! As if, living in Italy all her life, she could be so *very* innocent!" But her husband, having introduced her, had the good taste not to shock his young wife by ever alluding directly to the marchesa's position. Had she been English, he certainly never *would* have introduced her; but being Italian, it was quite another thing. Their ideas of morality were so different to ours; it was not fair to judge by the same standard. So he told his mother, and that matron, who

could become, on occasion, such a dragon of virtuous principle (as we have seen), acquiesced. The fact is, Carr liked the marchesa, and she amused his mother; so he encouraged their regular evening meetings. It would have been inconsistent, after this, to heap stones upon the poor woman. Beyond a general caution, therefore, not to become too intimate with their agreeable acquaintance, Carr said nothing to his wife on the subject.

Our friends from the villa, under the striped awning of their boat, and impelled by the stroke of a couple of lazy oars from time to time, pulled up under the wall of the widow Santi's house rather earlier than usual one evening. Carr was of the party, which his long excursions often now prevented his being, though he generally met the ladies on their return. But yesterday had been an unusually hard day; and this morning had passed with him consequently in a dreamy state of mind—endeavouring vainly to construe a chapter of Guicciardini, and finding it wearisome and hopeless. There he lay now, with half-closed

eyes, stretched upon the striped cushions, smoking his cigar, and watching the movement of his wife's fingers as she plied her knitting-needles.

"Your hands are getting horridly burnt, Geraldine," said Lady Carrylon; "and as to the end of your nose, it's covered with freckles, from your wearing that ridiculous hat, and no veil, as I do. I should never have kept my complexion if I hadn't taken care never to expose it."

As to her *keeping* her complexion, perhaps Gilda had her own ideas on the subject; but she replied—

"I can't breathe in a veil in such weather, and it's impossible to work in gloves, you know. Nothing will tan some people's skins," she added, with what Carr interpreted as a malicious twinkle of the eye. "Look at the marchesa. Nothing but that black veil at the back of her head, and a parasol, and she is neither burnt nor freckled."

"Naturally as brown as a berry!" said the elder lady, "and as coarse as—— Oh! here she comes. And how red her eyes are! I

declare the woman's been crying! How imprudent at her age! Nothing *is* so destructive; and she'd very little *but* her eyes."

So murmured Lady Carrylon as the marchesa, in her black veil, under a deep-fringed green parasol, appeared on the terrace walk above them, and then slowly descended the steps leading to the boat. Very unlike her usual self, she did, indeed, look absent and depressed.

Carr, with something like a groan at the exertion, rose and sprang out of the boat.

"Too shocking, the heat, ain't it, my dear marchesa?" screamed Lady Carrlyon faintly from her cushion. "I'm nearly dead with it. I see you are suffering too, only of course not like us foreigners."

"I am suffering, milady, from what *cannot* affect you, I know," returned the other, with a sad shake of the head; then addressing Carr, she added, "have you heard that Sora and Sommacampagna have fallen?"

"Why, no! Yesterday I found them at all the posts I visited, in such spirits about that

affair at Corona. They knew nothing of it then."

"It happened only yesterday, and you were in the opposite direction. It was a no less hard fight, I hear; but by a cowardly trick, the *Tedeschi*, —*birboni* that they are!—deceived our noble troops, and made them believe they were going to fraternize with us."

"How infamous!" said Gilda, her face all a-glow. "Such men to call themselves soldiers! Do you know the particulars?"

"It appears that a column of these wretches were seen waving a white flag, and shouting '*Viva l' Italia*,' '*Fraternità*,' and so on. The general—Aviernoz—hesitated for a moment, they tell me, but seeing the Austrian commander advance and embrace the officer of our leading regiment, he could no longer doubt, but hastened to greet these new brothers. They soon changed their attitude—the perfidious cowards!—and fired upon our poor brave fellows, butchering them by dozens, Ah! *Dio mio*, it makes my blood boil to think of it. Aviernoz was left at last

with only thirty men against two hundred ! He fought like a lion—they all did—and only when he fell to the ground, wounded in two places, were they able to take him prisoner. Poor Ayiernos ! even then he would not give up his sword, but flung it on the ground, exclaiming with indignation, '*I will never give up my sword to traitors !*' This, signora, is how they tell me it happened. I know no more than this."

"By Jove ! I'm sorry I was not there. Just like my confounded luck. I'm sure to miss any fun that is going on, and as to finding out anything from the peasants, they are the stupidest set——"

"You forget that your Italian betrays you to be a foreigner at once," said Gilda ; "you can't expect them to trust you, as a stranger."

"It is not that," said the marchesa, gloomily, "but the peasants about here are hardly true Italians. They have been corrupted by the Austrians, and do not enter heartily into the object of this war. Many of them will actually

own to you that they were contented *as they were*, and regard any change as dearly bought by the destruction of their crops and cattle. *Bestie!*" (and this, I fear, was applied not to the cattle, but their owners, judging by the forcible and active expression of disgust—unknown to English ladies—which followed).

"At all events, it is impossible to get anything out of them," said Carr, "and what reports they *do* bring me are sure to be wrong about the movements of either army."

"Almost all the Austrian troops in Verona have marched out, I hear, some to garrison these places they have taken from us. The movements of the rest we don't know yet."

"*You* at least manage to get speedy information, marchesa. I have a mind to ride off to-morrow in that direction, and get a peep of the Austrians if I can."

"If you come across that very gentlemanly young man, Count Blume, who was so civil about my passports when they stopped the carriage, Laurence," said Lady Carrlyon, "you

might ask him up to the villa. So *very* gentlemanly and pleasant!"

"“ Oh, how shall I your true-love know? ”” laughed Carr. “Not ‘by his sandal shoon and cockle-shell.’ How do you suppose I am to recognize him from a hundred other white wooden heroes, without visible space for the accommodation of their dinners? Shall I go up to the first of them who answers your glowing description and say, ‘*Du bist wie eine Blume?*’ ”

“ You are very silly, Laurence,” said his mother, upon whom the joke of the quotation was entirely lost; “and, as Sir Walter once said to me, nothing is such bad taste as constantly making jokes.”

“ It’s a very small one, and it’s my first to-day,” replied Carr, with mock humility. His spirits were decidedly rising.

“ Who is this Sare Voltaire of whom milady is constantly speaking? ” asked the marchesa of Gilda, in a low voice and in Italian. “ Any relation to that ugly old Frenchman, like a

monkey, who wrote such shocking things about love and religion, you know?"

When Gilda had explained the difference, the Italian exclaimed—

"Oh! then it was he wrote that pretty romance about the knight and the Jewess, and the *Talismano* too, where the beautiful queen follows her *cavaliere*, Ricciardo, to the wars, and——"

"He was her husband," said Carr.

"I remember it was Guido Lamberti who translated that and some others for us at Bologna," continued the marchesa, heedless of the interruption, "and that reminds me, Signora Carr—have you heard the news?"

Carr's jealous attention was roused in an instant.

"What?" he asked. "Does it concern Lamberti?"

Gilda had turned her head away towards the lake, and was leaning over the boat's side, which she grasped with both her hands. She waited in an agony of suspense for the next words.

"The poor old contessa, his mother, is dead! worried to death by the priests; and Guido,

they say, had no blessing from her when he left for the war."

"That is not true," said Gilda, hurriedly, but so low that it was difficult to catch her words. "The professor told me himself that Gui—that Count Lamberti *did* have his mother's blessing in spite of Padre Stefano."

"You have dropped your knitting into the water, my dear, in your extreme agitation," said Lady Carrlyon.

"Poor Guido!" sighed the marchesa. "He probably does not know his loss, and will learn it casually from strangers; for they cannot tell with what division of the army he is now, or where he is to be found; so it may be weeks before the news reaches him."

"He will feel it deeply," said Gilda quietly, but with still averted face: "he was so good, so devoted to her!"

"For God's sake don't lean over the side of the boat so much," cried Carr, with some sharpness. "You'll be over in a moment, Gilda. And though your friend *has* lost his mother, it's no reason you

should commit suicide." Then turning to the boatman, he asked in indifferent Italian, eked out with pantomime, "How deep is it here, eh?"

"*Profondo di tre uomini*," replied the man.

"A lugubrious measurement,—truly suggestive of suicide," remarked Carr. "The disagreeable idea occurred to me, by-the-by, the other day when I was bathing, how many dead men were lying under me."

"I remember poor Lord Byron's telling me that he once had the cramp when bathing. I never hear of a case now without a melancholy interest," added her ladyship sentimentally.

Whereupon the marchesa spoke of the fair Guiccioli, whom she had known at Ravenna in days of yore, and the talk flowed on uninterruptedly through fields of gossip thenceforward. Gilda sat by taking no part in the conversation—deaf to it, indeed; for her thoughts were far away in that desolate house, and thence they ranged to him, and pictured him, wherever he might be, when this heavy sorrow should overtake him. Alone, with-

out a sympathising voice to soften the heavy blow—wounded or in sickness, it might be, as when she last saw him. Carr watched the abstracted look on his wife's face. He was not satisfied.

CHAPTER XV.

THE next morning at daybreak there was a change in the weather, and when Carr rose everything betokened heavy rain. But he was not to be deterred by this. He had set his heart on reconnoitring the Austrian camp, if it were possible; and it did seem probable, from all accounts, that he would fall in with some portion of it at a few leagues' distance. Gilda was too much accustomed to these expeditions to feel any uneasiness, and Lady Carrlyon had expressed a mild approbation of this particular one.

"Take your macintosh, Carr," said the young wife, as she kissed him in the loggia; "and you may as well strap this roll of lint to your saddle. We will gladly afford *that* to our enemies, though I see you are not going to enrich them with the fat of the land."

"I should think not, indeed!" cried Carr, as he jumped on his horse. "I'm afraid we shall have a wet day, but *you're* more to be pitied than I am, shut up with my mother, who won't be in the best humour, I'm afraid. Don't rub her prejudices up the wrong way, Gilda, if you can help it—and I say, don't wait dinner for me: I can have something cold when I return, and my lady's patience oozes away, I know, very rapidly under fasting. Bye-bye."

And he rode off, followed by the black-eyed urchin who acted as his guide, across the hills.

Carr's predictions were fulfilled. The heavy clouds gathered thicker and thicker, and before long the rain began its gradual, steady downfall. The face of the window streamed with tears, and beyond it seemed nothing but a vile copy of the lovely landscape blotted in indigo: lake and mountain, vine and olive, one indistinguishable mist. The early hours were by far the least wearisome, for then Lady Carrlyon was still a-bed, and Gilda had her mother to write to, and a number of small household cares that eat away the

morning. But towards mid-day, when Lady Carrlyon made her appearance elaborately dressed, and there was less comfort than ever to be gathered from looking out of window, Gilda's spirits began to droop. The whole of that miserable wet afternoon those women spent together, and never were two human beings more heartily sick of each other's society. At first Lady Carrlyon plied the pump-handle vigorously, as she generally did when she found herself alone with her daughter-in-law; but Gilda had learnt discretion in her replies. Her ladyship had been almost offensive of late in some of her questions, and the strange way in which she alluded to Mrs. Courteney occasionally roused the dormant spark of pride in the gentle daughter. Like some other gentle natures, there was an under-current of energy and resolution—nay, even a combativeness—which only appeared on very rare occasions. There was something in Lady Carrlyon which excited this organ, phrenologically to speak, just as an electro-biologist might do by laying his hand on that particular bump. Carr was quite right in his caution. Not that

Gilda ever forgot the distance of years between herself and her husband's mother. She was never pert nor flippant. Lady Carrlyon might have liked her better, perhaps, if she had been so. She simulated an interest in the fashionable London gossip ; but it was a poor sham : she choked down many an indignant protest against the Carrlyon theories of life ; but then when it came to some direct home question, Gilda had once or twice been known to reply in a way which startled and offended her ladyship deeply. When Lady Carrlyon inquired whether Mrs. Courteney wore false teeth latterly, I am inclined to think she regarded it as an act of condescension ; when she took up a prayer-book with Gilda's name in it, and said she supposed Gilda's mother had never taken her inside a place of worship, she was surprised that the remark should be received with some resentment. Poor Gilda bridled her tongue as far as possible. She was most anxious not to widen the breach between them : but this afternoon it did seem more than ever difficult to sit quietly by, making lint in the window, and hear such cold,

false, and heartless remarks as she was compelled to listen to.

Five o'clock came—the dinner-hour—and then, at half-past, Gilda, remembering Carr's injunctions, ordered it to be served. It came; and she made it last as long as she possibly could, for the clatter of knives and forks was a relief, to say nothing of Giuseppe's presence, after that frigid *tête-à-tête*. Moreover, she had a lingering hope that Carr would appear before it was cleared away. But coffee was brought, and he did not come; and then Lady Carrlyon under the soothing influence of her dinner, or, as she was pleased to say, "from extreme prostration," fell asleep on the sofa, and silence reigned in her stead.

Seven o'clock—eight o'clock. Gilda sat there in the window, her work dropped upon her lap, and her head pressed against the pane. Where was Carr? He had never been out so late as this. For the first time a sense of uneasiness stole over her. The wind had been rising for the last hour, and with it the rain had somewhat abated in violence, though it drove in sharp,

sudden gusts round the house, and forced itself through the sockets of the ill-fitting Italian windows. Nothing beyond the terrace could be seen in the waning light, where the pink oleander-blossoms hung drenched and broken among shivering leaves, and the oranges—some of the trees overturned and broken in their pots—lay scattered on the soaking gravel path.

And then the *lucerna* was brought in, and the thin muslin curtains let down before the dreary windows; and Lady Carrlyon started up, exclaiming—

“What! not come back yet? Good gracious! what can have happened?”

It is an ugly phrase, which has blanched many a cheek beside Gilda's. The echo of her own fear thus distinctly uttered was sickening to the young wife. But the suspense, at least, was not of long duration. Giuseppe, grave and imperturbable as ever, came in a few minutes later with a letter on a salver.

“Giacomo, the boy, is without. He has brought this.”

It was directed to Mrs. Laurence Carr, but Lady Carrlyon made a dash at it (she was not particular in such matters), and tore the letter open before Gilda could reach it.

“My dearest,” she had the grace to read it aloud—“Do not be alarmed, but I am a prisoner, or, if that sounds too grand, I am *detained* by the Austrians, until I can prove who and what I am, on suspicion of being a spy. I was seized by a picket as I was reconnoitring the lines; and it appears that some rascally peasant volunteered the information that I was a friend of the enemy, and took provisions to them daily. They asked for my passport, and a variety of impertinent questions, which I didn’t answer to their satisfaction, and I finally demanded to be taken before the general of the division. I cannot say he received my explanations very well, but I obtained leave to send off the boy for my passport and papers, and these will set matters right at once. Tell my mother to let me have her letters to the Archduke, and Radetzki, and any other swells whose names are likely to inspire a general of

division with respect. Don't be the least uneasy, for I am perfectly safe, and never was better in my life. You may send me another pair of socks, by-the-by (the thick Shetland, in the left-hand drawer), with my dressing-case, by bearer. I am smoking the pipe of peace at this moment with the two officers of the guard—very gentlemanlike fellows—in the hut which has been appropriated as a guard-house. I beg to assure you I have neither manacles on my feet, nor the conventional pallet and pitcher of stage prisoners. I am going to play piquet with my stern gaoler as soon as I send this off, and find the adventure so far really rather pleasant than otherwise. I am only afraid (perhaps it would be truer to write *hope*?) that you may be anxious about me. Do not expect me before to-morrow evening, as I am told it *may* be late in the day before they examine my credentials.

“Ever, my dearest,

“Your loving husband,

“LAURENCE CARR.

“Tell my mother, with my love, that I find her

friends far better company than I expected, though I have not yet seen her *Blume*."

"Well! It's fortunate it's no worse," cried her ladyship, throwing the letter down. "I thought no good would ever come of these mad expeditions. It's bad enough for a man of his family to be subject to such a degradation, quite like a—a common person; but it will teach him a lesson, I hope, to have no more to say to these horrid revolutionists. As to you, my dear, I can't gratify him by saying you've been very *anxious* about him; but every one is not of the same sensitive temperament that I am, fortunately for their happiness, I dare say!"

"It is an awful night to send that boy back again across the hills," said Gilda, looking out, and without replying to her mother-in-law. "There was still daylight while he came, but he will never find his way back now. Had he not better wait till daybreak? From what Laurence says, it can make no difference in the length of time he is kept there."

"Well! I never did hear anything like that! Allow me to say, Geraldine, that if you have no feeling, you might *pretend* to have a little, on an occasion like the present. The idea of considering a wretched boy like that: a horrid, dirty Italian peasant, rather than your own husband! Putting impediments in the way of poor Laury's release, for the sake of—of——"

"I am not putting impediments in the way of his release, and if you choose to misunderstand me, I can't help it, Lady Carrlyon. It is of much more importance that his passport and papers should reach Carr safely to-morrow, even at mid-day, than that they should run the risk of being lost to-night. To keep to any track across the hills such a night as this must be almost impossible, I should think; however, we will hear what the boy says himself."

He was brought in, and a melancholy-looking object he certainly was, dripping at every rag (and they were few) that hung on him: but with two bright intelligent eyes that redeemed the sallow little face. The question was soon settled,

for the boy declared it was impossible to face the storm upon the hills. It was so dark that the latter part of his road he had been obliged to feel for the path with his hands. Moreover,—and this was evidently the chief cause of alarm in the boy's mind—there had been a fight down there, somewhere on the Mincio, and he—the boy—hidden carefully in a bush, had witnessed a skirmish between three of the fugitives and their pursuers. There were stragglers all about the hills, he declared, and he was afraid of being captured, perhaps murdered, by them. Under these circumstances (whether exaggerated by terror or not, it was impossible to say), it was evident that nothing could be done that night. Lady Carrlyon suggested scornfully that some other messenger might be found, but Gilda knew that the fattoria could produce no such. Finally, it was decided that at daybreak the boy should set off, accompanied by Giuseppe, with the necessary credentials, though Lady Carrlyon, to the very last, persisted in it that there was no reason why they should not start at once.

The wind meantime had risen very considerably and eddied round the villa, sweeping away tiles and chimney-pots from the crazy roof, whistling through every keyhole, and threatening to shatter every pane in its increasing fury. The frightened Italian women-servants ran hither and thither, thrusting pails up the straight, wide-mouthed chimneys, down which the water was pouring, and invoking each her patron saint to avert a second deluge. They wept and gesticulated, but they were not utterly useless, which Mrs. Timson certainly *was*, while manifesting great disgust for "the noise of them women." Sal-volatile and an ill-executed faint she considered more genteel expressions of alarm, and they kept the plethoric Carl constantly employed at her side.

The relative position of the two ladies was not improved by what had occurred. Lady Carrlyon, besides being much incensed, was in growing terror of the storm, which seemed threatening every instant to bring down the whole villa, and bury its inmates under the ruins. She sat cowering on the sofa, with an angry yet abject

expression of face, which under other circumstances might have brought a smile on Gilda's lips. As it was, she was by no means easy herself, though she went about the house endeavouring, by her calmness, to reassure the terrified servants.

Suddenly—it might have been half-past nine or later—there was a ring at the great rusty bell—rusty from utter disuse—that hung outside the loggia.

Gilda was in the hall at the moment, when the women stood huddled together like startled hares. Could it be Carr? Impossible. Who *could* it be at this hour? If anything could add to the nervousness of the assemblage, it was this unknown, almost unearthly, sound.

Giuseppe was instructed to go to the *grille*. He brought back word that three soldiers—volunteers of the Italian army—sought shelter from the storm. One of them was wounded. They had been pursued and had lost all knowledge of where they were in the darkness, but had at length been attracted by the lights of the villa.

"It is not a night to keep our enemies out, much less our friends," said Gilda. "Admit them at once."

"For God's sake, Mrs. Laurence Carr, don't think of opening the door! We shall all be robbed and murdered, *besides being crushed to death if the house comes down*. I desire—I *insist* on it, that you don't let these people in."

It was Lady Carrlyon who spoke, in a shrill, piercing voice, as she rushed in from the adjoining sala, and stood there shaking in every limb.

"Oh! if I was only back in Hingland!" sobbed Mrs. Timson, coming to her chief's support, like a good aide-de-camp as she was. "We shall be all ravaged and murdered! Don't let them in, m' lady—they nasty, horrid, Italian soldiers. It was predicted of me that my bones should bleach on a foreign shore; but, oh! be firm, please, m' lady, and don't let us be ravaged by the soldiers. It's bad enough to be crushed, as your ladyship says, but we've got our *characters*, leastways, and I'll stick by you, m' lady, as your ladyship's son

would wish and would do, in like according, if he was here, which, misfort'nately, he ain't."

After which heroic effort she sobbed herself away into silence, and Gilda's very clear, steady voice, was heard.

"I am sorry to add, to any one's alarm, Lady Carrlyon, or to do what you don't wish; but I must act in this matter as I know Laurence would if he were here. I could not meet his reproaches were I to shut out brave and suffering men on such a night as this."

"Pray, Mrs. Laurence Carr, do you remember who I am, that you speak to me in this way?" Lady Carrlyon herself was almost inarticulate with rage. "Do you remember that I am Laurence's *mother*?"

"Yes, Lady Carrlyon; and that I am his *wife*."

She was white and cold as a stone, but her voice did not shake. The crisis was come in which she was called on to act for the first time in her life, with decision and boldness. Her courage rose with the emergency.

"Mrs. Laurence Carr," quivered the exasperated lady, "I shall not condescend to bandy words with you, I shall inform my son of the way in which you have treated my remonstrances, and—and if you persist in this outrageous piece of folly and obstinacy, I shall retire to my own room. I will not countenance such a thing, and—and I call every one here to witness that I wash my hands of the consequences."

Whereupon her ladyship swept out of the hall, followed by Timson in a limp, hysterical condition.

The great door was unlocked and opened; and with the fierce gust of wind and rain that entered were drifted in three drenched and exhausted men, the unwitting cause of these unjust alarms.

CHAPTER XVI.



GILDA seized the single *lucerna* that stood on the marble table, and sheltered its flickering flame from the wind with her hand as the men entered. The next moment she set it down again; and the pale, trembling hand leant heavily upon the marble table.

Of the three men who stood there, two were not gentlemen it could be seen at a glance. It was one of these poor fellows who had been wounded in the arm: he was supported by the third of the party, who was in the background and indistinctly seen. But though wrapped in the heavy folds of a horseman's cloak, this person was unmistakably a gentleman. Impossible, too, to mistake the outline of that head; Gilda knew that Guido Lamberti stood before her.

There was a momentary rush of the passionate tenderness of old through all the woman's senses. He was there—he whose image so often, often involuntarily to herself, was present with her! She beheld him once more—him whom she never thought to see again. Her heart seemed to stop its beatings—the room swam round with her: for a moment—a moment only—she forgot everything but his presence.

And then came the revulsion; the cutting of a thought, cold as steel; the ebbing away of the blood as swiftly and suddenly as it rose. What had she to do with him now? why came he here? was it a fatality which brought this man and her face to face again at such an hour as this? They had nothing more to say to each other on this side of the grave. She thought of that last meeting. How were they to meet now?

Suddenly the recollection of his bereavement, perhaps as yet unknown to him, flashed upon her. She must see him, and alone. It was the duty of an old friend—she was nothing more—

previously. Even the servants were probably struck with this, for the plethoric Carl elevated his eye-brows, and made a significant gesture to Mrs. Timson, in whom curiosity had so far prevailed over terror as to bring her to the door of her mistress's apartment, where a section of her face was to be seen moving backwards and forwards before the cautious slit, so as to accommodate either eye to the focus of observation.

It was remarked that the stranger whom Mrs. Laurence addressed replied in a very few words, and even these were scarcely audible. Giuseppe, acting as chamberlain, then conducted all three men to unoccupied rooms, where dry clothes were provided them, and the wounded man was attended to.

Though the storm continued to rage with unabated violence meantime, the terrors of the female part of the community had visibly abated, strange to say, since the introduction of the three in-comers. Whether a new excitement supplied the place of the old, or that a greater sense of protection and security than the presence of Carl

and Giuseppe could inspire was thus afforded, is not for us to say. Certainly there were fewer sobs and invocations to the Virgin, with an increased alacrity, which was now directed to supplying the wants of their famished soldier-guests.

Half-an-hour latter Giuseppe, still acting as chamberlain, opened the door of the salotto, and announced Count Lamberti. The traces of illness yet remained on his face: he looked aged and pale and worn now that the light fell full on him. He advanced to the table where Gilda sat pretending to work. She held out her hand, and began rapidly,—

“Sit down: and, first of all, tell me how you are? You have been very, very ill, I know: are you quite well again? quite strong enough to return to this life of fatigue?”

“Yes; I am well again, I thank you.”

She went on—anything to stave off for awhile the subject she had at heart,—

“Are things going forward as we could wish? I fear not.”

He shook his head.

"There is no unity; and a house divided against itself cannot stand. Neither Rome nor Naples are to be trusted. Already they are beginning to play us false."

"Will not France lend Italy a hand?"

"Charles Albert is jealous of calling in foreign aid."

"Alas, poor Italy! Is there then no hope?"

She spoke nervously: the tears stood in her eyes.

"Our fight is the fight of a dying man—the struggle of despair. We shall not die in vain, however," he added gloomily. "Over our dead bodies another generation will stride to victory and freedom. We shall have at least done our country a service by showing the world that Italians were not the despicable race it held them."

"Guido"—the tears were raining down her cheeks now — "you speak despondingly and bitterly. What do you look forward to—for yourself?"

"Nothing. I am not a hopeful man. I've had to deal with hard truths all my life. We may continue this guerilla war for months; but we shall be beaten. There is a hope, however, nay, a certainty, though I may not live to see it realized, that Italy will rise up stronger, and fight with a more united will some day, from the knowledge of how her sons died for her in '48."

It was unlike a man in the very prime of life; this shutting himself out from his country's future.

How different from the burning, eager ambition of the young patriot nine short months ago! It seemed doubly cruel to tell him that which she had upon her mind now, and which it was evident he knew not. After many hopeless efforts she found voice enough to say:

"Have you heard from our mutual friend, the dear old professor, lately?"

"I saw him only two days since. He has joined the army at last, with a new detachment of volunteers—men of all ages—from the univer-

sity; but we are not in the same division. I rode over to Goïto to see him."

"And—and—what news did he bring of your mother?"

He stopped short in his reply, and fixed his keen eyes upon her face.

"You have heard something, signora?"

"Yes; I heard—from the Marchesa Onofrio——"

"What?"

"That—that your mother was——very ill."

He started up and walked to the farther end of the room. The drops stood upon his brow as he turned and faced the lamplight again.

"For God's sake, tell me the truth. I have been expecting it for months. *Is she dead?*"

She uttered no sound, but the movement of her head was enough; he sank down and buried his face in his hands. The heaving of the strong man's shoulders showed how violent was the internal struggle. Gilda sat there as motionless as himself; a long, long interval, as it seemed to her; ere he raised his head and said,

"Thank God! She is at rest."

Gilda, by a sudden impulse, laid her soft small hand upon his arm. He shivered at the touch, and at the sound of his name pronounced by that voice once more.

"My heart bleeds for you, dear Guido, indeed it does. But I wished to break this sad news to you myself, if you didn't know it. I thought it would be worse for you to hear it from strangers in the camp."

"I thank you for that," he exclaimed in a broken voice. "The priest's letter, if he ever wrote one, has not yet found me. I did not think the end was so near at hand, but God knows it is better so! My poor mother, she is spared much future misery. I would not have her back here for all the world can give. Yes! she is at peace now! She never was so in her lifetime. She is a martyr to the Church, if there ever was one. They killed her, those cursed priests, by a daily death, year after year, and now she is free of them *for ever!* I have no doubt about that. I *know* it. They called me an unbeliever. Perhaps they were right. I am sometimes in-

clined to doubt whether there be a future state—any reign of justice to follow this long injustice! No two lives can be more different, more entirely separate in thought and principle, than mine and hers. If there is a hereafter, shall we be parted for ever? Do you believe it? I have suffered much; I have done little else but suffer! a lonely life of sacrifice. Will it all go for nothing? because I have shrunk from the tyranny and hypocrisy of that monstrous lie, wherewith these men ground down her life like powder!”

He spoke fiercely, and again the little hand was laid upon his arm.

“Guido, I have learnt much since——since we used to see each other so often. I know now that it is appointed unto every living soul that has a warm beating heart, to suffer in this world. It may be more or less. But, oh! Guido, though we may be separated—no matter how—from all we love best *on earth*, never believe it is for ever. I don’t know much about religion, perhaps, but I feel there *is* a hereafter.

I know that it is just because God *does* permit cruelty, and injustice, and misery here, that it will be righted by-and-by. If I didn't think so I should be very unhappy."

"Unhappy?" he said, quickly, with an altered manner. "Is it possible that—that any shadow has fallen on you already? I hoped that *you* at least were perfectly happy."

She coloured, for she felt her words had implied more than she intended, and yet she could only conscientiously reply—

"I am not unhappy. I said I *should* be if I did not believe firmly in a future. 'Perfect happiness' it is not meant any one should have here. You know my mother is no longer with me, and I have a sad presentiment that our separation will be a very long one. That is a dark shadow, for nothing can ever supply her place. Can I help looking forward to a time when there shall be no more separation, and we shall be reunited to all those we have loved best on earth?"

"Pray for me!" he murmured, and by an

irresistible impulse, while he rose to take his leave, feeling that this interview had already been protracted too long for his powers of self-command, he raised the small hand that still lay close beside him to his burning lips.

At the same moment the door was flung open, and Lady Carrlyon, followed by Mrs. Timson, appeared. It was owing to no "singular coincidence" that their arrival was so opportunely timed, but to the plain fact (as Mrs. Timson afterwards owned) of their having been listening at the door for some minutes previously. Her ladyship's face was more radiant than anything else, though there was a great assumption of virtuous horror in her demeanour when she spoke.

"Mrs. Laurence Carr, after the scene of which I have been an involuntary witness, I think the sooner you decamp the better, and rid my unfortunate son's house of your presence."

She had translated this speech into execrable French. The foregoing conversation had been carried on in Italian, of which she did not understand a word, but, as she afterwards said,

“there was no mistaking those disgusting familiarities,” and the intention of Lady Carrlyon’s harangue was at least equally clear. Had a bomb exploded in the centre of the room it could hardly have produced greater effect.

An unspeakable horror transfixed Gilda to the spot where she stood, staring at Lady Carrlyon with almost vacant gaze, until slowly the eye kindled with indignation, and the deep-dyed flush of outraged innocence overspread her face. But before she found words wherein to reply to this insult her mother-in-law had offered her, Guido exclaimed, in a voice that sounded like distant thunder—

“Who is this lady?”

“My mother-in-law.”

“What do these insults mean, madam? If you have overheard what has passed, how dare you use such language to this lady? Her conduct requires no defence. If your son demands any explanation from *me*, I will satisfy him that my presence here was——”

“I shall tell him nothing of the sort, sir; for

probably you're a professed duellist; and it would only be *a repetition of the dreadful business which made Mrs. Carr's mother so notorious years ago.* I have too much regard for my son's life for that, and I can only repeat that she had better go away at once before his return, as it's perfectly impossible she can remain with him after *this.* The case is really too outrageous—too palpable! before the whole household, too! Closeted for nearly an hour at midnight! I am perfectly ashamed, Mrs. Carr! perfectly ashamed! I suspected how it was long ago, and my suspicions were still further roused to-night, when you persisted against my advice—against my *supplications*—in admitting these men. I am not quite a fool, Mrs. Laurence Carr; I saw at once it was an assignation. Now, as I consider that my son has left me in his absence to watch over his wife's honour——”

“Your son's wife requires no one to watch over her honour,” interrupted she, drawing herself up to her full height, and looking really splendid in her new character. “And since it

has come to plain speaking between us, Lady Carrlyon, let me say that *I* have also suspected *you* since the first moment I saw you of being a wicked, unscrupulous woman. I decline having anything further to say to you. My explanations shall be made to my husband, and he will judge between us."

"Facts are facts," said Lady Carrlyon, "and two eye-witnesses, I believe, carry proof with them, all the world over."

"It depends," retorted her daughter-in-law, now roused to the utmost, "whether they are worthy of credence. Their motives must be above suspicion. A woman who can be guilty of listening at a door with her lady's maid—listening, as it happens, without being able to understand a word in this case—could be guilty of swearing away any one's character who stood in her way. But your son *knows you*, Lady Carrlyon, and that is my safeguard."

I am not sure that she was justified in sending that last shaft. To tell a mother that a son despises her is a strong measure. But Gilda had

great provocation, and in her excitement words dropped from her which she would certainly not have used deliberately.

Lady Carrlyon was absolutely livid. She took the salts from Timson's hand, and gasped out,—

“Your insults have no effect on me; but as you are so utterly shameless, I shall not interfere with you any more, but leave you to finish your *tête-à-tête* without interruption,” and she turned towards the door.

“No!” said Gilda, seizing her by the wrist, and forcibly holding her to the spot where she stood. (Those quiet women sometimes have a marvellous force and determination when they're thoroughly lashed up!) “No! since you are here, you shall stay—you shall stay and hear me bid this gentleman farewell.” She held out her hand to Guido, and her voice trembled a little as she said—still in English for Lady Carrlyon's benefit: “If you would oblige me, you will depart with the early morning. Think no more of the scene you have just witnessed; and above all, do not let it injure my husband

in your estimation, by raising a suspicion of his kindness and his confidence in me. It is not necessary, but, if you will, you can write to him; only leave this house *early* to-morrow. You will grant me this last favour, won't you?"

He murmured an assent, as he dropped her hand; and then, leaving Lady Carrlyon and her maid to follow, Gilda passed out of the room.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE storm gradually cleared away about day-break, and an hour later a party of five persons left the villa: Giuseppe and the boy on their way to the Austrian cantonment; Guido and his companions to rejoin their division at Peschiera. The arm of the wounded man was dressed, and being refreshed with supper and sleep, he was ready to set forth again. Not so Guido. With a mind harassed by the most painful and conflicting thoughts after a sleepless night, he turned his back upon the house which held all he loved on earth. But the conduct of this story does not allow us to follow his fortunes at present. We must remain at the villa.

She—Gilda Carr—suffered as women of quick and keen susceptibilities alone do suffer that

night. She found relief in a passionate burst of tears when she reached her own room; but there were things far beyond the sharp indignity she had suffered, which festered at her heart, and which no tears could heal or soften. There was the mysterious, horrible allusion which Lady Carrlyon had tauntingly made to Gilda's mother. *The dreadful business which made her so notorious years ago.* What did it mean? Was it only a baseless calumny like that which she had now trumped up against Gilda herself? The idea that her mother was otherwise than innocent, I need hardly say, never for an instant crossed her mind; but the more she thought over it, the stronger grew the conviction that there was some dark and painful circumstance belonging to the past with which her mother was connected. It explained much that was otherwise inexplicable; it confirmed a suspicion which had more than once crossed her mind; it might even account for her sudden departure. This thought haunted her all night long. She could not get rid of it; it weighed upon her; it forced itself

in every conceivable shape on her imagination. If there was a secret sorrow or reproach, why was she not allowed to share it?

Unconnected with this, yet for ever present before her, was the sad, stern face of the Italian. His words of hopelessness as to this world—of doubt as to another, rang in her ears. God help him! She might at least *pray* for him. There was no law that forbade her doing *that*.

As to Carr, she never for an instant doubted how he would treat his mother's accusations; but then came the consequences. After what had passed it was utterly impossible she should live in the same house with Lady Carrlyon. She knew how anxious Laurence was to avoid estrangement from his parents, and if she now were the cause of it, this would be a heavy additional trial.

Carr had been awaiting the return of his messenger for some hours when the boy appeared. As ill-luck would have it, the general had sent at an unusually early hour to know what account the Englishman could render of himself, and Carr was very naturally annoyed at the non-arrival

of his credentials. The storm, as is often the case in the neighbourhood of mountains, was partial: while it raged round the Villa Fossombroni it was scarcely felt a few miles off. Thus Carr had no suspicion of the real cause of delay; and there was certainly a plausible excuse for the extreme ill-humour in which his faithful messengers found him between nine and ten o'clock that morning.

After a pretty sharp cross-examination, the authorities were satisfied of Carr's identity with the person named in the letters as "the son of a distinguished English lady whom she was about to visit;" and with the Englishman specified in the passport, as the possessor of *capelli e baffi biondi*. The inevitable caution under such circumstances to be more prudent in his future rambles, and, above all, to abstain from conveying provisions to the enemy's camp, was followed by an invitation to the general's breakfast table; where, as Carr was a tolerable German scholar, he was able to appreciate a variety of very coarse jokes interspersed with very big oaths. Though

he had written of his captors in the most amiable spirit the previous night, the charm of novelty had worn off by this time, and he was heartily sick of them before he quitted their noisy table and jumped upon his horse towards noon.

His mother, with a solicitude very unlike her usual habits, was waiting for him on the lowest step of the loggia. His eye glanced rapidly round, but there was no one else; and the shade deepened on his brow. In truth, Gilda, who but a moment before had run out to greet her husband, upon seeing Lady Carrlyon had retreated hastily, being anxious to avoid any personal encounter with her mother-in-law. She felt sure, too, that Carr would come to her room at once, so there she retired and waited in momentary expectation of his appearance. But when more than half an hour elapsed, she could stand it no longer, but sent a message begging him to come to her.

Lady Carrlyon, meantime, found the ground in a very favourable state. Her son was weary and dirty: conditions of mind and body which tend to make a man irritable. He had not re-

covered his displeasure at being detained an unnecessary number of hours, as he believed; and he felt considerable resentment at his wife's want of alacrity in coming forth to meet him after all his perils. With what art and labour his mother poured her falsely coloured tale into his ear, we will not stop to tell. Carr knew his mother, it is true; he knew the nature of her sentiments towards his wife, but there was strong circumstantial evidence to bear out *almost* all she said, and the demon of jealousy rose fierce and strong within his breast. How much or how little he believed perhaps he did not exactly know himself, but when his wife's message reached him, he acted as a man of his character always acts, —from the hot impulse of the moment.

She ran forward to embrace him, but he drew back, and taking each hand which she extended, he led her to a seat, while he remained standing.

"You have sent for me, Geraldine" (he had never before called her so), "and I am come to hear what you have to say. After that, you will be good enough to listen to me."

"Laurence! dear Laurence! what is the meaning of all this? Why did you not come to me at once upon your return?"

"I was detained. My mother found it possible to come out and welcome me on my return, but my wife——"

"Dear Laurence! don't say that. Your mother and I have unfortunately had a difference."

"I know it."

"And I could not meet her. I preferred, at least, seeing you alone first."

"You thought, no doubt, you would get round me!" he exclaimed violently, with a sudden change from his cold and cutting manner. "But I have been made a fool long enough. I don't think your own mother, or any one else, can accuse me of *unjust jealousy* in demanding an explanation of your conduct, and I insist upon having it."

Gilda looked at him in sad surprise, and the tears gathered in her eyes.

"I had not expected *this*—and yet it is natural, I suppose, for you have only heard your mother's version of—of the events of last night. I don't

ask you what she said or insinuated. You know perfectly well your mother's cruel and unjust prejudices against me, Laurence."

"Oh! my mother's not to be believed, of course. I was prepared for that. But she is careful of my honour—of the honour of the family; and let me tell you it would be well if my wife were equally so."

She had risen, while a rapid change passed over her face, and there was something of dignity, nay, grandeur, in her whole demeanour, as she stood before him, which impressed Carr in spite of himself.

"Stop! hear me before you say any more—before you speak words which you would regret one day having spoken. If I thought it possible that *seriously*, in your inward heart, you could doubt me, I should feel as if it were all over between us. I did last night what you or any other Englishman would have done. I gave shelter to three men, one of them wounded, and all of them drenched and exhausted. I was as much *pained* as astonished, when I discovered

among these the last person of all others I would willingly have received here during your absence. And yet I sought an interview with him alone " (she looked Carr fearlessly in the face), "for, in memory of our old—old friendship, I felt that I ought to break to him the sad news of his mother's death. God knows, that interview was painful enough to me as it was! It needed not your mother's violent intrusion and gross insults to render it more so. And now you must judge between us. If you believe her, I am not fit to be your wife—let me go back to my mother. But if you believe *me*, you must do so fully and not by half-measures. Lady Carrlyon and I can no longer remain under the same roof. It is impossible."

Carr's anger was cooling, and if he had for one single instant entertained a doubt of Gilda, her spirited self-justification had set that at rest. But there was a good deal of jealousy—a good deal of wounded *amour-propre* yet unappeased: and he would not readily abandon the position of an injured man. Moreover, to be forced into a

decision between two courses of action was what he especially disliked.

“Your conduct was, at least, very imprudent, and certainly open to animadversion.”

“If I were in the same position to-morrow I should act in the same way.”

“Oh! we have no doubt of that. Of course my wishes would have no weight compared with the attraction of such society!”

Gilda's cheek flushed, but she replied, calmly enough—

“Did I ever disobey your wishes, Laurence? I do not believe you will ever ask me to do what is wrong; and until then, I hope I shall always try to fulfil them. In any dispassionate moment, when you will listen to all that passed between Guido Lamberti and myself last night, you will not desire that I had acted otherwise, I think.”

“I shall always desire that my wife does not put herself into a compromising position. My mother naturally has English ideas of propriety, which you have grossly outraged. Your refusing

to let the messenger return at once for me was enough to rouse her suspicions, to begin with."

"Giuseppe will tell you, which your mother, I suppose, has not done, that the boy was too terrified, and positively refused to set out during the storm."

"Then your admitting three strange men, with none but Giuseppe and that porpoise Carl in the house, was most incautious—most dangerous! If my mother was indignant and used strong language; if, in her anger, she conceived unjust suspicions of you, it was certainly not without apparent foundation. To be closeted for half-an-hour in the dead of night with any young man, particularly *so old a friend*, is contrary to our conventional English notions of propriety, and is quite enough to destroy your reputation, were it known."

"I have done nothing of which I need be ashamed," said Gilda, proudly; "and I desire no concealments."

"But *I* do, if you please; and as you expressed

yourself just now so amenable to my wishes, you will be good enough to remember this. My mother, I trust, for my sake, may be induced to forget, or, at least, to be silent as to, what passed last night. But I cannot hope that anything like cordiality can be restored between you——”

“It never existed,” observed Gilda.

“And, therefore, I shall not oppose her going at once, as I have no doubt she will insist on doing. But, in order that this feud may not be kept up eternally, I wish you to offer her an apology for all the annoyance and anxiety which your inconsiderate conduct—to use the mildest term—has caused her.”

Gilda sank down again on the chair, and buried her face in her hands. Suddenly she looked up.

“Do you know that Lady Carrlyon insulted, grossly insulted, my mother’s name? If, after that, you desire me to ask her *forgiveness*, I will do so; but it will be painful, and it will not be sincere. I can command my lips, but no more, Laurence.”

“Insulted?” he exclaimed; then turning away he muttered to himself: “Fool! to believe her, on her oath, that she would keep the secret! What did she say?”

“She talked about ‘the dreadful business which had made her so notorious.’ What did she mean? If there is any truth, any shadow of truth to justify so cruel an insult, tell me, I beseech of you, tell me the truth. I am not a child, and I can bear anything rather than your mother, and such as your mother, should use this language, while I am ignorant of what so nearly affects me, and unable to answer it.”

“She probably referred to some stupid old story which I will tell you another time. Think no more about it. She will not repeat that language, and you must make allowance for her being angry, Gilda. There is something to be forgiven on all sides, only be civil to her while she stays here. I ask no more.”

And he abruptly left the room.

He was justly indignant now against his mother. But, perhaps in his heart of hearts, he was not

sorry to have a good, genuine grievance against her at this moment.

He entered with knit brows.

"Well!" cried her ladyship, eagerly.

"So you have broken your word—your solemn promise, mother, not to allude to Mrs. Courteney's past history."

"Well! and if I did, what does it signify? though I'm sure I never said anything—nothing more than perhaps a *distant* allusion to her horrid mother, and there was no great harm in that, I suppose!"

"You have deeply wounded Gilda, and very much annoyed *me*, by your unguarded language."

"Deeply wounded, indeed! I like that! What can it signify now, I repeat? On the contrary, the story should be spread far and wide. It was one of the worst things in that infamous plot against you, that all this was concealed—that you didn't know, poor boy! that you were marrying the daughter of an infamous woman. Of course—that sort of thing's in the *blood*—what could you expect but this from any one with the Caliston

blood in their veins? And that horrid creature knew it well enough."

This was not agreeable language to Carr, and chivalry spoke out.

"The lady you designate thus, I have already told you, I have a sincere pity and regard for. I believe her to be much better than half your fine ladies who have not the *honesty* to run away."

"Including her daughter?" sneered Lady Carrlyon; "though her worst enemy can't accuse her of being a 'fine lady!' However," she added, "of course it is all over *now*, you will make your arrangements for obtaining a separation at once. I am afraid at present the evidence is not direct enough—the case altogether is *hardly* enough to obtain a divorce, but you would soon do so. In these sort of cases a woman never stops at the first step, particularly if she is let to go her own way."

"Why should I let her go her own way, then?"

"Why? Why? I really don't know what to make of you, Carr. To get rid of her, of course! I suppose you mean to do *that*. You're not going

to be a disgrace to your family, and a laughing-stock to the whole world by going on living with such a woman as your wife, are you ? ”

“ Listen to me. My wife has no knowledge of the conventions of English society, and has acted *very* foolishly, I admit—but I believe her to be innocent, perfectly innocent, and——”

“ Good heavens ! And didn’t you tell me just now that you *knew—that you had known all along* she liked this horrid Italian fellow, and not you ? Is it possible the artful creature has bamboozled you completely in these few minutes ! ”

Carr coloured scarlet.

“ I don’t know what folly I may have uttered in the heat of passion. I am cool now, and my eyes are open. I am not easily ‘ bamboozled,’ for I see perfectly what you have been driving at ever since you came, and that to separate me and my wife was indeed the sole object of your coming here. Now, I tell you plainly that I am not going to separate from her, mother.”

Lady Carrlyon adopted that invaluable remedy, an hysterical flood of tears.

“You ungrateful boy! to speak so after all I have done for you. You’ll bring my—my—”(she would have said gray hairs, but probably felt that form of speech inappropriate to their dyed condition)—“you’ll bring my sorrows to the grave! You’ll break my heart, and then you’ll be happy! You who had such fine prospects, and all so thrown away! You’ve no feeling, no pride, no nothing! To let yourself be blinded and deceived by this creature! Don’t talk to me! I won’t listen to anything you have to say. I won’t stay another day in the house with her. It’s perfectly disgraceful! shameful! Your father will be pleased to find in addition to the *respectable* connection you have made, what a *complaisant* husband you are! Your friends at Brooks’s will be entertained no doubt; and as to what the dear duchess will say, I dread, I positively *dread* to think of it!”

“Come, mother, you ought to know me by this time. I’m tolerably obstinate, I flatter myself. You never knew me care for what any fellow at the club chose to think or say. I may be passionate, jealous, and a weak fool into the bargain

about my wife, but that's my own look out, no one else's. As to your duchess, I should recommend her not to offer me her advice—a woman who has only been respectable since she has grown too old to be otherwise. Pah!"

"Oh! pray insult the aristocracy! I can't expect anything else after your treatment of *me*! It's of a piece with your revolutionary principles and all the rest of your dreadful *irreligious* notions now. I've nothing more to say. I give it up. After all the time and trouble I have spent, to say nothing of money, and for it all to end in this! Such black ingratitude!"

And her ladyship burst into another and louder torrent of tears.

Carr bit his lip and appeared to hesitate whether he should speak. Why? There was one last effort to be made to soften his mother's heart. Should he make it? It was a forlorn hope scarcely worth venturing; and he had kept it back until now.

"Mother," he said at last, in a low, almost tremulous voice, "before six months are over I shall be a father."

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Lady Carrlyon started up, and then sank back again, with an impotent effort to scream.

“You wretched boy! It only wanted this to complete your misery and disgrace! I see now how that designing creature has got round you. But I’ll never acknowledge her child, never—never! And I’ll order post-horses to-morrow morning, and I’ll never receive her—never! so it’s no use bringing her to England, and—and—”

The angry woman sobbed, and choked, and gulped for some time longer. Her son did not attempt to alter her decision. The post-horses were ordered for the following morning.

But with the following morning came the notification of a great change to both Carr and his mother. Lord Carrlyon was dead! Personally, no one felt the loss very keenly. And if Carr chose to repudiate his father’s debts he would find himself a richer man than the late lord had been for many a year. That was important.

The dowager (alas! that she should be so styled,) set off alone a few hours later. She knew all that the change implied for her. A

small jointure, and the gloomy dower-house! Her face, as Mrs. Timson poetically expressed it, was "already in weeds;" and no wonder. Her tone, too, was considerably lowered in the interview with her son; and she went the length of extending a torpid hand to her daughter-in-law, before she stepped into her carriage.

Two days later, Carr and his wife followed her to England.



PART III.



AU CINQUIÈME.



PART III.

AU CINQUIÈME.



CHAPTER I.

I MUST now pass over a period of eighteen months, and take the reader to Paris in the beginning of the year 1850. How the several fortunes of those in whom I have tried to interest this same reader so far have been affected in the interval, he will learn by degrees. At present I will ask him to accompany me to the Italian Opera House on a certain night in January, where he will have an opportunity of seeing one or two faces already familiar to him.

A stranger in the stalls that night, facing about so as to have a view of the entire semicircle

of boxes, had he been a man of refined tastes and delicate perceptions, would probably have been attracted by the pale face of a young woman who sat alone a great part of the evening in front of one of the *loges couvertes*. She was very simply dressed; flowers and ornament were "conspicuous by their absence," to use a stock paradox of orators. She was not brilliantly coloured by nature or art to catch the eye. But she had a sweet, sensitive face that listened to the music; and the expression of it in repose had an indescribable interest which was wanting in all the more showy beauty by which she was surrounded.

Nearly opposite to her was a box occupied by three persons, to which I am about to introduce the reader. A lady sat in the front of this box also, but concealed behind the curtain, so that, except from the stalls, her face was not visible. My suppositious stranger, however, as he stands there, if he be a man of strong animal passions, an admirer of acute individuality (*type*, as the French call it), of low black brows, and sinuous

raven hair, of a firm throat, and bust, and arms, developed in all the maturity of womanhood, would turn his opera-glass more frequently in this than in any other direction. A striking-looking woman certainly, not easily to be forgotten when once seen. Whether to be called handsome, must be a question of individual taste; but those who saw her three years ago would not believe how time has acted upon her as upon fruit, mellowing and ripening to an unforeseen roundness of form and richness of colour. But perhaps this lady's most remarkable attribute are her eyes. The fire and languor of passion, the flash of wit, and the keen sword-glance of observation belong alike to those deep eyes, which in repose resemble the clear brown pebbles we see in the bed of a river. A few very large diamonds are strewn like stars through the loose serpentine coil of her raven hair. The deep yellow of her dress is softened by a covering of Venetian point-lace, and a bouquet of rare flowers lies on the cushion before her.

Seated opposite to her, so as to face the house,

is a stout, middle-aged man, with a face smoothly shorn, save where it has been permitted to break out into a short, stubby black moustache. There is an air of the *Bourse* written all over him. He wears spectacles; his hair is cut very short, and his dress, which is scrupulously neat, has the peculiarity of all looking too tight for him. The pliant kerseymere follows every contour of his plump legs, like a mould of black wax. The satin waistcoat is in a ripple of little plaits between each button. The coat, particularly about the arms, looks as if it would require to be ripped up with a penknife to free the sufferer under its *peine forte et dure*. It is only necessary to add that this individual's right hand had a tendency to bury itself periodically in his trousers' pocket, where it derives apparently some unknown satisfaction from the contact of certain coins and keys.

At the back of the box, and behind the lady's chair, is a fair, florid Englishman of thirty, from whose manner and demeanour the most casual observer must detect that he is a very warm

admirer of the lady. She occasionally addresses an observation to him in English, but her conversation is generally carried on in French, for the benefit of her elderly companion. She has scarcely vouchsafed a glance round the house until the *entr'acte*, when she raises the large opera-glass beside her, and drawing back a corner of the curtain sweeps the tier of boxes.

"Who is it that is so fortunate as to attract your attention, Duchesse? Your glass has been fixed in one spot for full two minutes."

"Only a woman," replied the lady, as she laid down the glass, with a smile; but the smile was anything but pleasant, as the Englishman felt, though not gifted with remarkable acuteness of perception.

"Do you know anything about her?" added she, after a pause. "That pale, vapid-looking woman in white, opposite?"

"I should think so. That's Lady Carrlyon: married to a cousin of mine. It's the fashion to admire her, I believe; but I can't bear that style of woman: looks as cold as a stone."

"You are right. I knew her once: she is as cold and passive as a stone, or she wouldn't be sitting there now. She doesn't care a straw for her husband; but she will always be a model wife, I suppose, for she has no passion in her composition."

"And yet, if the old dowager is to be believed, there were some very queer stories even about her in Italy."

"What do you mean?"

She turned sharply round, and pierced him with those keen eyes.

"Oh! I don't know: some Italian or other whom she let in at night when Carrlyon was away,—so the old dow says. Very likely it's a lie; but she swears there would have been a separation, only Carrlyon was still spoony on his wife then, and preferred even playing *Georges Dandin* to getting rid of her."

The lady turned away, so that the young man could not see her face, while she laughed a hard metallic laugh.

"You are very scandalous, Fitzhugh. And

has *milord*, then, got tired of his wife now? You say he was '*still* spoony then.'"

"Well, upon my life I don't know. Men have such different ways of evincing their love—for their wives. Carrlyon's awfully jealous; but then he's a deuced good-looking fellow, you know, and made a great deal of; and, as she's not strong enough to go out every night, she's left a good deal alone."

"And yet he would be furious at her finding some one to cheer her solitude? That is very like you men: you expect a devotion when you've no longer any right to it. But I'm surprised about my mild friend Carrlyon. I thought he was going to be a pattern husband—a model of devotion."

"That depends on what you expect. I really believe he's very fond of his wife; as fond as—as——"

"As any man ever is? Ha, ha! I'm afraid, my dear Fitzhugh, that if possession is nine points of the law, the *desire* of possession is more than nine points of love with all you men."

"Now, I declare, Duchesse, that's not fair. It all depends on a fellow's character. *My* idea of devotion is being constantly near the woman you really care for."

"But then, *mon ami*, you see you are not married, or anything at all like it, to the woman you 'really care for,' if indeed she exists."

Then, apparently thinking that this English colloquy had lasted long enough, she turned to her other companion, and addressed a few observations to him in French.

A young man at the same moment entered the narrow passage which divides the covered from the uncovered boxes at this theatre; and looked round him.

"*Mon cher Réal*," said the lady we have heard addressed as duchesse, tapping her elderly friend on the arm, "will you go round to Madame de Czerny for me? Ask her to come home and sup with us, after the opera. I expect two or three more men," and as Monsieur Réal with an air of resignation left the box, she turned round to Fitzhugh, and said rapidly,

"See! there is Lord Carrlyon close underneath here; go and tell him from me that an old friend wants to renew her acquaintance. There! be quick! off with you, for he is actually looking round towards his wife, as if he thought of returning to her. Mind! you're not to come back without him."

The young man did not look best pleased at the commission; he probably had anticipated a short *tête-à-tête*; but against the Duchesse's orders there was never any appeal.

He left her with a comical look of disgust, and coming behind Carrlyon slapped him on the shoulder.

"I say, you lucky dog! there's the greatest *lionne* in Paris, the woman we're all mad after, wants to see you in her box;—says she's an old acquaintance of yours."

"My dear fellow, I am a respectable married man. I don't frequent the society of *lionnes* now."

"Well! but this is a duchess. We all know from London experience, that *that* makes all the difference."

"Don't be cynical, Fitzzy, it don't become you. Who's your duchess?"

"De Valentino."

"I'm none the wiser. Never heard of the title."

"Oh! it's not a sham. It exists, or rather did exist; for I believe the old duke, who died last winter, left no heir. He was a Neapolitan, and an exile, a horrid old rip—and this is his widow."

"Well, but who was she?"

"Ah! you're getting too curious. No one knows; perhaps you can enlighten us. The duke picked her up in Italy, I believe, and she managed her affairs so well (deuced clever woman), that he actually married her, and died here in Paris three or four months afterwards, leaving her nothing but debts and a title!"

"How does she live, then?" said Carrlyon, laughing.

"Who shall say how any fascinating woman lives who has heaps of adorers? Of course there are plenty of *scandales*, but I don't believe any

one knows anything positive. Many a man like that old Réal pays through the nose, I believe, for the sake of being seen with her—of having the *éclat* of a supposed *liaison* with a woman like herself. As to me, I've only known her lately, and I'm too poor to do anything but lay an opera-box or a bouquet upon the altar of this divinity; but, by Jove! she's a woman to go mad for, Carrlyon,—look out for yourself!"

"My dear fellow, as I before observed, I'm *married*. You don't know all the delightful safety conveyed in that word. But where is she? You make me curious to see this fair lady who claims my acquaintance."

"You can't see her from here. She's behind that curtain. You must come round, if you want to see her."

"Well! I suppose there's no harm in——"

"Come along, man."

And the two cousins entered the box together.

"Am I so changed that you don't recognize me, Lord Carrlyon?" said the Duchesse, in rich musical voice, as she smiled and held out her

hand. She drew back the curtain at the same time, and pointed to the chair opposite, which Monsieur Réal had just left. "Have you forgotten a certain drive when our carriage broke down, and you were good enough to bring us home in yours? I have not seen you since your marriage-day."

Carrlyon coloured.

"Pardon me. I haven't a Frenchman's art of paying compliments, or I should endeavour to express that, if I didn't recognize you at the first moment, it is that time has added so much to—instead of taking from, your personal attractions, Madame la Duchesse—besides my not being in the least prepared to see you here."

He felt, to say the truth, rather uncomfortable. He remembered all the horror his wife had expressed on the rare occasions when her former companion's name had crossed her lips. He remembered her strange notes to himself, the unexplained tie subsisting between her and the late Mr. Courteney, the darkness and mystery which had always surrounded this woman. At

the same time it is as well to remind the reader that Lord Carrlyon had never known anything of Sara's *campaign*. Mrs. Courteney and her daughter had shrunk from speaking of the equivocal position in which she had been found at Peschiera; and when the marchesa alluded in conversation to Guido's devoted nurse, she did so with no knowledge of her name. Carrlyon had heard enough of the duchesse, however, from his cousin, to add to his discomfort on recognizing in her the Sara Gisborne of whom he retained anything but a favourable impression; and he began to revolve in his mind how he could gracefully execute a retreat from the position in which he found himself. The duchesse had drawn back the curtain, as I have said. His wife's box was exactly opposite.

"Very neatly said for an Englishman," smiled the duchesse, "and how is Lady Carrlyon? I suppose I mustn't call her Gilda. We had a little quarrel, you know, *petite jalousie de femme*, when we were both silly girls." (Carrlyon winced). "But bygones should be bygones, now

that we are both married. She looks pale, poor dear. I hope her spirits are not bad? They used to be so very high."

"She is delicate. She inherits her father's constitution, I'm sorry to say."

There was a slight contraction in the pupil of the lady's velvet eyes, and an involuntary movement of the mouth. It was not lost on Carrlyon. She went on in a mocking tone,

"And Mrs. Courteney? She is no longer with you, I believe? Your generosity was amazing, in keeping her so long after you had been so deceived! Of course your family could not be expected to countenance such a person. Where is she now?"

"In Italy. We shall see her in the spring."

"Poor Italy. Our friends there are most of them dead or in exile. Have you seen Count Lamberti since your marriage?"

"I have not."

"Then you do not know his fate?"

There was a sort of bitter triumph in the way she asked this.

"No, nor am I deeply interested," he replied ; but his cheek kindled.

"Your wife, at least, will like to hear of her *old friend*. He is here—in Paris—teaching Italian. Utterly ruined—what little property he had having been confiscated after the fall of Rome. He fought there to the last, you know, he and the old Garofalo—you remember him? The old man was killed, and the young one is here, trying to earn a few francs."

No doubt it cost that woman something to say those few words, apparently so carelessly uttered. But we know what a consummate actress she was. There was nothing to indicate that the subject touched her deeply.

Carrlyon did not reply. He rose to take his leave.

"How long have you been in Paris?" she said, as she held his hand.

"We got here at Christmas."

"And you remain the winter, I hope?"

"Yes, if my wife doesn't feel the cold too much."

"Won't you come and see me — Place Vendôme? I receive on Tuesday evenings. To-morrow I have a box at the Palais Royal, if you like to look in; but, perhaps, you're too virtuous (such a model husband!) to enjoy naughty French plays?"

"Thank you. We dine at the English Embassy. The naughty French plays are many of them very dull, *I* think, in spite of their reputation. I have no other objection to seeing one."

"Have you your horses in Paris?"

"I have no horses anywhere just now."

"Because I have a charming hack, quite at your service whenever you feel inclined to accompany me. I ride to the Bois every morning at twelve."

Lord Carrlyon bowed, and murmured something about Madame la Duchesse being too kind; and the box-door opening at that moment admitted Monsieur Réal.

"Madame de Czerny will join your supper-party, Duchesse, and begs to be allowed to bring

an Italian friend of hers, who knew you, he says, formerly—le Comte Razzi.”

Had any one present known, which none did, the nature of her past relations with the man she was thus asked to receive, the study of the duchesse's face would have been wholesome and instructive. It wore an expression such as Rachel occasionally turned to admirable account in her finest parts. There was the slightest possible amount of annoyance and surprise, quickly fading away into the most sublime contempt, which just curled the corners of her mouth. “Does that miserable butterfly dare to disturb my repose? Is he fluttering round me still? Let him come. I will not break the wretched creature on the wheel. He can do me no harm now.” The changing expression of her face said all that to the initiated.

As it was, Carrlyon only smiled to remember how infatuated the Bolognese gentleman had been two years before on the subject of this same woman.

“Will you come back and have supper with

us, Lord Carrlyon, when you have seen your wife safe home, like the model husband you are?"

"Not to-night, thank you."

"Ah! I see Gilda keeps too tight a hand on you at present. A man is like a horse. You should let him have his head a little."

"It is possible, however, for a man's head, like a horse's, to turn towards his own stall and his manger, Duchesse. Good-night."

He was pleased with himself for having said rather a good thing, and made a better exit than he expected.

As to the duchess, let her be content. She has plunged a fresh dagger into the heart of the woman she has never forgiven, and will never forgive. She has shown to all the world that she is upon the best possible terms with the young Englishman. She has kept him twenty minutes in her box before the whole house. Her jealousy and her vanity have both had their triumph to-night. Let her be content.

Carrlyon, who was again detained for a few

minutes by a friend in the lobby, only just reached his wife's box as the curtain fell, and the stream began pouring out of the theatre. He placed the cloak on her shoulders, and she fastened it. She looked a shade paler perhaps than usual, but took her husband's arm without a word, and passed out into the crowd.

One of the world's "good-natured people," I will *call* her Mrs. Smith—if she ever reads this, let her conscience smite her—came up with her husband while the Carrlyons were waiting for their carriage. The husband spoke to Carrlyon, and the wife took an opportunity of whispering to Gilda:

"I *do* feel for you, my dear! I should be so wretched if Charles frequented that horrid woman's company. Such a dangerous creature! No man can withstand her, they say."

"What are you talking about? Who do you mean?" faltered the young wife.

"Why, the Duchesse de Valentino—the woman opposite you, of course. The poor duke! We knew him very well. He was *such* a charming man!"

"Was he?" repeated Gilda, mechanically. But the next moment, recovering from her painful bewilderment, she had the tact to say, "The lady I suppose you allude to is an old friend of mine. I did not know her under her present name, but Lord Carrlyon made her acquaintance through *me*."

Before the lady could adequately express her astonishment, Carrlyon had caught sight of the servant gesticulating that the carriage was ready, and he hurried his wife through the crowd.

There was a face suddenly stretched forward, the worn, hollow eyes of which followed the carriage with the most intense interest, until it disappeared round the corner. And then another carriage drew up, a small little brougham, with a coronet, and the most dapper of English tigers, into which carriage was handed, by two gentlemen, a dark, handsome woman, flashing with diamonds, on whom the pallid face in the crowd looked with a very different expression—a kind of disdainful pity, a shuddering sorrow, which made him quickly turn away. The young man to whom

this face belonged had found himself wandering in the streets that night, cold and famished. The light that streamed from the great portico of the opera had attracted him. There was a nearer approach to warmth in the crowd pouring out than was to be found in the black and frozen streets.

There is no fire, no fragment for supper, awaiting his return to that miserable garret *au cinquième*, to which he is slowly bending his weary steps after that first glorious vision has past from sight, as he walks along ; and a hard, hollow cough echoes with those steps down the street. He has tasted nothing since breakfast, and yet there are certain francs in his pocket earned by the sweat of his brow ; but they belong already to his landlord. They were paid him this evening at the end of a tedious lesson, and they will be paid away to-morrow ; for he is proud and scrupulously honest, is this young man. But as he turns the corner of the last street, the grateful odour of chestnuts roasted over a pan of charcoal reaches him. There are a few *sous* at the bottom of his threadbare pocket. He takes out two, and

hands them to the old crone, as he warms his numbed fingers over the clear-burning coals. Then he walks away, but stops presently, leaning against the wall, to gather strength for the remainder of his road. Thus, weak and suffering, yet undaunted by pinching misery, with a few chestnuts for his supper, the heir of the Lambertis returns to his solitary garret.

By way of contrast, let us glance for one moment at another interior that night.

The Duchesse de Valentino has gone home to her gilded apartments, where the most profuse luxury reigns. The supper at which she entertains her select circle is sumptuous, though not too much so to offend good taste. If the wit be not very brilliant, the hilarity is *apparently* overflowing; and then when the champagne has ceased to run, the hostess is supplicated to raise her enchanting voice. And the syren does so, and it is pronounced far more enchanting than anything that has been heard that night. Song follows song; she raises the excitement of her admirers to the utmost pitch, and she accepts

the incense with a half cynical smile. At last, when they are all gone, she will fling herself on a sofa, and burying her head in the cushions shall sob her heart out, that fierce, passionate, ill-governed woman, to think of her degradation, and of the price she has to pay for the power and position she has obtained. There is no shadow of *repentance*, that sanctifying dew which falls on the thirsty heart; but there is contempt and disgust, a sense of satiety in fulness, of failure in triumph, of disbelief in everything human and divine.

CHAPTER II.

LORD CARRLYON'S determination to wipe off all his father's debts involved a rigid economy for some years to come. Carrlyon was let, the house in Belgrave Square sold. A son had been born to Lady Carrlyon during the past winter (which had been spent in London); but the joy consequent on this event had been short-lived. The child only survived its birth a few weeks, and the dowager was once more triumphant and hopeful. After this—it was the spring of '49—the Carrlyons left England again. No wonder that the 'six months' experience of London's fogs and glooms, associated as it was with a mother's first grief, left no pleasing impression of England on the mind of one bred under the sunny skies of Italy. She had scarcely

made a friend. Lady Carrlyon had taken industrious care that no member of the family should step forward and extend a cordial hand to the friendless stranger. Abandoning her hopes of effecting a rupture by a *coup-de-main*, the dowager now trusted to time to wear out the heavy chain which her son had riveted upon him. But her petty spite was vindictive and vigilant as ever. It is remarkable that even sensible people will often accept facts advanced by some one for whom they entertain a thorough contempt, rather than trust their own discrimination in testing the probability of such facts. So it was generally received as incontrovertible that Lord Carrlyon was a "martyr to circumstances," that he had been entrapped by a very designing mother, who, as every one knew (for Lady Carrlyon's parentage was by this time a matter of public notoriety), was a most depraved character. As to her daughter, there is a scriptural proverb about figs and thistles, which was made to do a great deal of duty; while in reference to the stories circulated about her by the dowager, was there

not a profane one touching fire and smoke which the most leniently-disposed must find conclusive?

Gilda was unfeignedly glad, then, to exchange the chilling visits of ceremony, the eight o'clock dinners, and the powdered footmanhood of London, for the more unsophisticated life to which she had been accustomed. She and her husband were thrown more together again than had been possible in England, where business of various kinds had called him much from home, and Gilda had spent many entire days by herself. It would have seemed natural, perhaps, that her mother should have been sent for as the time of Lady Carrlyon's confinement drew near: but that was not to be. The idea, by constant repetition, had been firmly established in Lord Carrlyon's mind, that it was not wise or justifiable to have his mother-in-law an inmate in his house *just at first*, on arrival in England. He knew the world was inclined to be very ill-natured; the presence of the divorced lady would be a legitimate excuse with many for avoiding Lady Carrlyon. It would still further

prejudice his friends against his wife, and he had no right to allow this. By which specious argument he proved, of course, that he was as indifferent to the world's opinion as he always professed himself, and that he acted only from the most unselfish love and regard for his wife. Gilda herself was careful never to give utterance to the intense longing she felt to behold that dear mother again. The cloud had never been cleared up. Something there was—*what*, she knew not—which rendered her mother's name painful to Laurence, and her presence unacceptable. He had avoided all her inquiries; he had at last forbidden her to question him further on the subject: it was a sealed book between them. She looked forward doubly to going abroad with the hope of rejoining or at least meeting her mother; but Mrs. Courteney was still in Italy, and Laurence decided that their first summer was to be spent in the Pyrenees, and this winter in Paris. Hitherto, therefore, mother and daughter had not met. Laurence spoke of Switzerland now for the spring; "and then your mother can join

us," he added. His wife's brimming eyes and beaming face were his reward.

I have said that she was thrown more with her husband when they left England; but on reaching Paris something of the English life was renewed. Gilda began to go into society for the first time since her marriage, and to fall into that daily routine which she soon foresaw would form a large portion of their existence henceforward. She knew little or nothing of the world, but she had the good sense to understand that if Laurence showed any desire to go out, the wisest thing was not to discourage it, but to accompany him. He was very popular both with men and women; and though we know that he affected to be superior to that sort of thing, the silent flattery of popularity was soothing and grateful to him after his long abstinence from this moral opium. Unfortunately the physicians were unanimous in declaring that Lady Carrlyon ought not to over-fatigue herself; should avoid late hours, heated rooms, and excitement of all kinds. She was expecting her confinement in

April, and it was urged on her, that her child's health would, in all probability, depend on her own during the next three months. To this argument she reluctantly yielded at last; but it made her unhappy to think that Laurence should remain at home on her account. "It is of the greatest importance," wrote the dowager, "to Carrlyon's prospects in life that he should mix in all the diplomatic society, and be appreciated among them, as he cannot fail to be: for I am as strenuous as ever in my exertions to get him *something*, and an embassy would of course be the *best* thing. So I do trust you will not *discourage* his mixing, if you are in such poor health that you cannot go out." It will be seen there was a hollow truce between the mother and daughter-in-law, which was ratified from time to time by one of these hard didactic letters. This one was not without its effect. The young wife felt it would be selfish to allow her husband's prospects to be injured by preventing his "mixing;" and she urged him continually to leave her, when perhaps it would have been wiser not to have

done so. There may be no diminution of affection at first, but a habit of life is acquired thus, which is often destructive of domestic happiness.

Were they happy then? It was generally thought so. Lord Carrlyon was very proud and evidently still very jealous of his wife, though the most lynx-eyed of his friends could never detect in her any disposition to flirt. But there was that inexorable voice for ever whispering in his ear, "Beware! you must be doubly careful of her, *it is in the blood*; it is an inheritance—that tendency to inconstancy." And it was no use his shutting his ears indignantly. The voice spoke just as clear next time.

Many an evening now she spent alone; and on the rare occasions that she did accompany him into society, it was to see him surrounded by a world of which she knew nothing, in whom she felt no interest, and who talked a language she scarcely understood. They had been married now two years. She had had opportunity enough to study her husband's character, its good and its weak points. Was she a happier woman? As time


removed her farther and farther from that early heart trial which had left its brand indelibly upon her soul, the sharp, painful outlines of the past were in a measure softened. I confess this at once, though I am aware it will destroy much sympathy for her. But like Mistress Robin Gray, she had been striving "a gude wife to be" every day of those two years: and her efforts, so far as in her lay, had been rewarded. It is even possible, had her husband's character been other than it was, that she might now have been enjoying as moderate a share of happiness as falls to most women. Nothing could ever have replaced the one strong passion of her early life; but do we not see around us every day women who, under like circumstances, are peaceful—contented? The misfortune was that there was an absence in Laurence of all that would have consolidated her affection; of all that her character most needed, that her heart most yearned for. Brilliant social attractions, a poetical temperament, a refined and accomplished mind—nay, generosity, kindness, and a thousand other good qualities are but as the

sculptured leaves and flowers around a column. If the plinth be of granite, well: if of more friable material, its capital will not withstand the rude hand of time.

Gilda's nature essentially demanded *strength* of the man on whom she now endeavoured to lean. The attitude of a woman who is perpetually obliged to watch every varying shade on her husband's face is never morally healthy. It is probable that a woman of more decided will, a more domineering, more exacting—in short, what is called a *cleverer* woman, would have been very much happier in Gilda's place. She would have "managed" her husband. And he no doubt after a struggle or two would have succumbed, had she only been sufficiently adroit. But management was not in Gilda's line. Her sole thought was to please her husband; and the occasions were rare when she ventured to act upon her own private judgment, if opposed to his. Such occasions, however, had once or twice arisen: once, I remember, in reference to the treatment of her poor little baby whom she nursed herself, contrary to Laurence's

wish, until he got the doctors to declare that she was injuring the child's health as well as her own. She reluctantly yielded. The child did not die for some weeks afterwards, and from other causes ; but the young mother could never get rid of the impression that it might have been saved had she continued to nurse it.

The Carrlyons had now been in Paris three weeks. They had apartments in the Hôtel de la Terrasse, facing the Tuileries gardens. In these gardens Gilda walked daily with her husband in the morning, when the weather permitted. He had an objection to her going out without him, under any circumstances whatever. She had ventured, the morning after their arrival, with Marietta, as far as a shop in the Rue de la Paix ; but Laurence was seriously annoyed, and she never thought of repeating the offence ; so that she was virtually shut up, unless Laurence happened to be at home when the sun shone ; and if the afternoon was fine, and he was gone on a round of visits, it was a grievous trial to the poor child of freedom to look through her prison



bars and see the gay carriages driving past into the Champs Elysées. Of course, she occasionally went the round of visits herself, but this was not a diversion which she much appreciated. She had few acquaintances: no friends. Laurence seemed always to discourage her making any; though he was jealously susceptible of the proper ceremonious respect and attention being shown her. His own friends he never asked inside his house. *He* said he couldn't afford to entertain; and *they* said, of course, that it was "all his wife." "A fellow's never worth anything after he's married, particularly when he's married out of his own set." So Lady Carrlyon was voted cold and dull—altogether a mistake; while only a few were enthusiastic in their admiration of the exquisite charm and purity of her expression, and the great simplicity of her manners.

Among these, I remember, was poor Ary Scheffer, who expressed himself warmly about the young English lady. Indeed, I used to think at this time, that she strongly resembled one of his favourite heads; too thin, perhaps, for critical

beauty, but certainly most loveable and lovely. The change in the whole expression and character of her face must have struck all who had seen her two or three years previously. No child-like vivacity, no joyous sunbeams chasing each other rapidly across the smooth, serene brow. The hope of youth had died out of that still young face : the tranquil, sober-coloured afternoon reigned there prematurely.

CHAPTER III.

GILDA was silent the whole way home. It was not in her nature to be sulky: she would frankly have expressed her annoyance, but she scarcely knew whether it was right—or *wise*, at least—to do so with her husband.

Laurence, on the other hand, was waiting for this expression of annoyance, and angry that his wife chose to remain silent. Perhaps, if the truth must be told, he would not have objected to her feeling just the least touch of jealousy.

Now she either felt nothing of the sort, or she was immeasurably his superior in her power of self-restraint: so much was clear. At last his own impatience, when they reached home, burst out,—

“Your friend, Miss Gisborne, has had an

extraordinary rise in the world. I suppose you saw her to-night? She is now a duchess."

"I cannot call her a friend. I have a bad opinion of her."

"Oh! there was some quarrel—a jealousy between you; she referred to it to-night. I never could tell why it was you were quite so hard upon her always. Not that *I* ever liked her; and you needn't be the least afraid that I am going to fall a victim to her charms now."

"I am not; but I think she has regarded it as a triumph, having you in her box this evening. I know it from the way in which she looked across at me. And—and, if you don't know it, Laurence, I must tell you that she is not well spoken of. I don't want to be uncharitable, but whether she be a duchess, or whatever she is, I can't regard her as having *risen* in the world since she was with us. She was false and ungrateful to my mother; and I heard her with my own ears entering into a compact with the man she afterwards so grossly deceived. All this is enough to make me regard her with

aversion, without any other cause. I confess, dear Laurence, that I should be sorry if you frequented her society much ; and as to myself, you would not ask me, I am sure, to renew our acquaintance, would you ?”

“Certainly not: at the same time I must correct one statement. You remember how she nursed your mother five days and nights? As to your father’s extraordinary legacy, or whatever you choose to call it, *I* know of nothing to make one believe that she got him to sign that paper by any unfair means. Of course it was a most mysterious bequest, but your mother always chose to maintain a rigid silence on the subject, so I really know nothing to justify your accusation of her ingratitude to Mrs. Courteney. As to what she may be otherwise, I dare say her character won’t bear strict investigation, but neither will half the women in Paris : and, as I often tell you, Gilda, you *can’t* be too careful, particularly in such a scandalous place as this.”

“I dare say you’re right, Laurence.” .

“I can’t *cut* this woman exactly,” he went on,

after a pause. "She was uncommonly civil, offered me her horse, and so on, and as I don't know anything positively *against* her, I can't *cut* her, you know, Gilda."

His wife was silent. Perhaps she thought what she had just told him was sufficiently against the lady in question. If her husband didn't see it in that light she could say no more. Her silence was misinterpreted by Carrlyon, who returned to his original charge.

"But you needn't be the least alarmed, you needn't be the least jealous, Gilda: I should not think of *frequenting* this lady's society."

"I don't understand jealousy until one's confidence has been shaken. I should only be sorry for you to be seen often with her, because of the way in which this world of Paris talks. I have seen enough of it already to know that."

"Oh, yes! of course, and all the men here seem mad after her. I assure you I was quite envied to-night," he added, laughing. "She wanted me to go back and have supper with a small party in her apartment."

"Did she?" said Gilda, but in no tone of inquiry.

"And to join her party at the Palais Royal to-morrow—but I refused that also."

"We dine at the Embassy," observed his wife, quietly.

Her husband turned away, rather piqued that he could not rouse so much as a spark of jealous uneasiness in his wife's breast.

The following morning, at an early hour, Carrylon was at Galignani's. He had formed a magnanimous resolve before falling asleep the previous night, and was bent on carrying it out. His efforts to learn the address of the person he sought did not at first seem likely to be successful. He looked down the list of Italian teachers, he questioned in vain the foggy man in spectacles who waited on him. He was on every account anxious not to have recourse to the Duchesse de Valentino: and yet it seemed as if he would be reduced to this measure. He was leaving the shop, when a younger man behind the counter, who had heard his last question, stepped forward.

He remembered a sick-looking gentleman who called some time ago, and left a card ; but Paris was already so overstocked with professors of every language under the sun, that they, Galig-nani, were able to offer him no encouragement. They told him that, without special interest, it was hopeless. He had since called once, but there was, of course, nothing for him. Perhaps this was the person Milord was in search of. And after a hunt among dust-covered cards, so it proved. Signor Lamberti, Teacher of Italian, Rue du Bac, No. —.

To this address Lord Carrlyon at once directed his steps. He had a generous disposition, and the romantic element in his character was touched at the deed which had suggested itself to him. He had well considered in what terms he should convey his desire to assist the man who was once his rival. But he had not contemplated what steps he should take if the Italian were from home, and this, it proved, was the case.

“ At what hour does he generally come in ? ”

demanded Carrlyon of the grimy old woman in the porter's lodge.

"Probably not till night. Sometimes it is very late."

"Has he so many pupils then? Is he giving lessons all that time?"

The crone shook her head, with a not unkindly smile.

"Poor young man! I should think not, indeed! He doesn't earn enough to buy himself a dinner every day, by the look of him. It is only two days ago I said to him, 'Look you, a shopman's trade is better than yours. There's my boy, now he is well-paid and well-fed, and looks rosy, *he* does.'"

"Ah!" said Carrlyon, anxious to encourage the old woman's garrulity. "He is rosy, this son of yours? a handsome fellow, no doubt. And in what house is he?"

"In the Maison de Lille, m'sieur. He *is* handsome, though I should not say it, and a great favourite with the ladies, but such a good son to me, m'sieur! Never misses a Sunday

coming to see me, dressed in his beautiful clothes, with a satin stock, and a flower in his button, when he might be, ta—ta, *I know what I know.*”

“Monsieur Lamberti is not so fortunately endowed, perhaps,” Carrlyon remarked, with a smile. “The Maison de Lille would not find it pay to have a sallow, melancholy-looking Italian, eh, madame?”

“*Du tout, du tout ! Il aurait aussi des bonnes fortunes, celui-là, s’il était seulement bien nourri !* If he only would take to the counter ! but a man who generally goes without a dinner, what would you have ? It is a pity, a great pity, m’sieur.”

Carrlyon was, or fancied himself to be, a great physiognomist. The old woman was to be trusted: in this instance he was not deceived. He tore a leaf out of his note-book, and twisted it round a note of five hundred francs, writing in Italian outside that it was left by a friend. He placed this in the old woman’s hand, together with a five-franc piece; charging her to deliver

the former without answering any questions relative to himself. A stranger had left it; she knew no more, and was straightway to forget what manner of man he was.

Carrlyon walked away with very considerable satisfaction. He could not well afford that twenty pounds just then; but he had spent it in a way which gratified various qualities; some which we have named, some we will not inquire more particularly into; since, even in the texture of many a good action, may be discerned the secret thread of human frailty.

Another weary day of expectation, and of fruitless inquiry, for the Italian teacher. His engagements at present stood thus:—A daily and gratuitous lesson to two poor young sisters, whom he had casually heard of, as preparing themselves for governesses. A lesson three evenings in the week to a young clerk, who was shortly to join a merchant's house in Leghorn. And a lesson—*nominally* twice a week, in reality not oftener than once a fortnight, by reason of the lady's caprice—to the daughter of an English

gentleman. This left a large margin of unoccupied time, and alas ! as his *concierge* had rightly divined, a purse wholly inadequate to the simplest wants of daily life. Of his private means he had absolutely nothing left. His landed property, with what small possessions he had left at Bologna, had all been confiscated by the Church ; and now, on a constitution impaired by the wounds and the fatigues of the last two years' campaigns, the privations and the wearing anxiety of this daily struggle were telling visibly. That cough grew more hollow every day. Though the man's energy bore him up wonderfully, more and more frequent grew the occasions when he had to stop in his rapid walk through the streets, and lean against a wall. He waxed weaker and weaker. His pride and his tenacity of purpose were the same as of old ; but in appearance he was scarcely recognizable. The face fallen away, the lines about the mouth hardened and compressed, the eyes so far, far down in those deep brown hollows ; it was indeed surprising that the old

woman should discover any charm in that wan, haggard face. That she did so was owing to that secret *power* in it, which influences most women, young and old.

He had sought for work far and near that day, the work of a penny-a-liner, at the door of three editors; the work of a Grub Street hack in the shops of a dozen librarians. All without success! of no avail his great endowments, his vast acquirements here, it seems. The pride of the Bolognese University, the accomplished scholar, cannot earn his bread, while the rosy son of the *concierge* revels among the flesh-pots of Egypt! This is no overcharged picture; it is a commonplace, as false as commonplaces usually are, that ability will always be recognized sooner or later. Ay! it is too often *later*; when it has passed away irrevocably from among us. There is no nimbus round the head of genius by which we shall recognise its presence; and while presumptuous ignorance is too often thrust to the fore, great intelligences may be passed over, unless some happy accident reveal them to the world.

There was a time when this man's heart had been full of wrath and bitterness; it was so no longer. The two great hopes of his life were dead, and the adversities through which he had passed had not been without their uses; though it may be that he had yet somewhat to learn. But he had more tolerance in present evil; more trust in future good. Without a sneer at the blockheads on whom he saw the loaves and fishes showered, he met his daily disappointments, what some might have considered his daily humiliations. It was not in the power of such things now to touch him deeply; so long as he could retain his independence he was almost indifferent to the rest. It might be from extreme bodily prostration that all ambition seemed dead within him; there was no goal to win now, but sufficient unto each day was the evil thereof.

He came home towards dusk, feeling the absolute necessity for rest. An acute pain in his chest, from which he habitually suffered now, had increased greatly this afternoon, owing, probably, to the scanty nourishment he had taken while

undergoing great fatigue. He could scarcely drag his weary limbs along, and the sight of the battered gates of the old *porte-cochère* was an inestimable relief at last.

The old woman seemed struck with the additional pallor and attenuation of the young man's face, as she leaned over her door and handed to him Carrlyon's note, for she shook her head, muttering to herself at the same time,—

“*S'il était seulement dans la Maison de Lille . . !*”

He took the little twisted slip of paper in his hand without interest or curiosity apparently, but while the old woman was lighting his candle (and she was an unusual length of time about it) his fingers listlessly untwisted what they held. He opened out the crisp folds of the *billet de banque* and held it to the light.

Then followed a silence which seemed to the old woman a very long one, and he looked up with knit brows and a stern questioning face.

“Where does this come from?”

“How am I to know, m'sieur.”

“Who brought it?”

"A man."

"In livery?"

"No."

"What did he say?"

"He desired that might be given to you."

"Nothing more? Think, now—try and remember."

"Nothing. I am *quite* sure."

The old woman resolutely shook her head, and Monsieur Lamberti, taking up his candle, proceeded without another word to climb slowly the four pair of stairs that led to his little room.

It was a strange way for a starving man to greet the hand in the dark that held out life to him.

CHAPTER IV.

WHEN he reached his own room, he sat down before the paper and attentively considered the handwriting. It was unknown to him: but one thing was sufficiently clear, it was the writing of no Italian. He might have surmised long and vaguely, but for an accidental circumstance. Lord Carrlyon had not observed, in tearing the leaf from his note-book, that a few faint lines—a mere scratch, indeed—had been drawn by him on the reverse side of the page. This sketch—if sketch it could be called—indicated the outline of Gilda's head, as she bent over her book one evening; and so happily had the character been caught, that it was not possible to mistake for whom it was meant.

Ah! Carrlyon, those few pencil-strokes have

not only frustrated your generous design, they will be the cause of much present and future misery. A night of acute anguish, of humiliation such as he never believed it possible for him to have felt, was the immediate result produced by that little scrap of paper on the individual it was meant to benefit.

In an instant all seemed plain before him. This act of *charity* originated in the angel from whom his pride had alone separated him; she had associated her husband in these pitying alms bestowed upon the starving Italian teacher. To almost any man there would have been a measure of bitterness in this cup, very hard to accept. To Guido, with his temperament, and under the peculiar circumstances in which he stood with regard to the Carrlyons, it was an aggravation of his sufferings; a degradation to which all he had undergone hitherto was as nothing. He thought of his *last* interview with Gilda; of the letter he had subsequently written to Lord Carrlyon, and of the short, cold answer he had received in return. He remembered this, and writhed

upon his sleepless pallet as he pictured to himself the wife's pleading eyes, and gentle, persuasive voice urging on her husband the deed of mercy towards an abject, miserable man!

He was unwilling, very unwilling to come into personal contact with Carrlyon or his wife. Putting aside every other consideration, he knew how the mere sight of *her* as she stepped into her carriage had power to trouble and confuse his thoughts; how the stubborn heart he had been schooling so long rose up in rebellion then; and how all that fostered her memory unfitted him for his daily work. As to her husband, it was natural that he should feel extremely repugnant to seeking an interview with him. But there was no choice in the matter. After arriving at that conclusion, the young Italian fell asleep towards early morning from sheer exhaustion; but only passed from a world of painful reality to one of agitated dreams.

It was unusually late when he woke. The cravings of hunger, which he had staved off the previous evening, were so sharp that he felt the necessity of strengthening his exhausted powers

for the trial that was before him, by something more than the parings of a stale loaf and his single cup of coffee. The bright eyes of the old portress twinkled as she watched the young man sally forth and enter the café opposite.

“Ha! *bon*—that comes of my friend, the Englishman. The poor fellow has not entered that door once since he came to lodge here. Thank God, my Gaston has his bottle of Bordeaux and a good breakfast every morning!”

Guido found no difficulty in learning Lord Carrlyon's address. Towards midday he reached the Hôtel de la Terrasse. His lordship was not at home. Here was an unlooked-for difficulty. He could ill spare the time to be ruming backwards and forwards, when he ought to be at work, or, at least, trying to find it. Moreover, until this question was set at rest, and the subject dismissed from his mind, he felt it would be impossible to do anything. He considered as he stood there—at the porter's lodge—whether it were possible to return the money by letter. *Had* he by any chance been mistaken in his surmise,

might not this course lead to considerable awkwardness and misapprehension? As he thus debated a very smart *femme de chambre* passed him. In her promotion to a Parisian bonnet and shawl, Guido would hardly have recognized Marietta, had she not stopped short, exclaiming with Italian impetuosity, as she clasped her hands,—

“*Dio mio!* Who would have thought of seeing Count Guido here! How glad the signora, my lady, will be—how glad! But you look ill, Signor Conte, pale, and thin in the face. Ah! me, how it recalls that dear country, seeing you again!”

“I am afraid—” he stammered, “that I cannot see your mistress now, Marietta. I had business with your master, but he is not at home.”

“Ah! Signor Conte, you will not refuse to step up, and see my lady for a few minutes only? You will tell her of Italy. She never hears of the dear country now. She sees no old friends: it will do her good.”

Such an interview must be far more painful than any with Lord Carrlyon could possibly be.

But should he shrink from it on that account? Was it not the simplest, the most straightforward way, to appeal directly to her who had instigated this *act of charity*? He would put all else out of sight. He would forget himself; his own wounded feelings. He came there to satisfy a just sense of honour and independence. Now, at least, he would allow no false pride to mar the accomplishment of the task in hand.

After a momentary hesitation, he followed Marietta. His brain swam round; his tongue seemed cleaving to the roof of his mouth, as the ante-chamber door opened, and closed behind him, and he found himself once again alone in the presence of Gilda.

She had heard the name so joyously announced by Marietta, and had started up from her chair; her cheek a shade paler, her breathing quick and irregular, her fingers slowly relaxing their hold of the baby's white frock on which they had been employed until it slid down upon the floor at her feet. She was not otherwise agitated outwardly. Her manners was composed and her voice tolerably

steady when she spoke. She made a movement as if to hold out her hand: but he either did not, or would not perceive it.

"When we last met and parted, Lady Carrlyon," he spoke in a low husky voice, "it was under painful circumstances. You will readily believe I would not seek to recal them by troubling you with my presence now; but your husband is out, whom I called to see, and you guess, no doubt, what it is that brings me here, that makes me seek a few moments' interview with you?"

"No, Guido, I do not; I did not know you were in Paris. I grieve to see you looking so ill."

"You did not know I was in Paris?" he repeated.

"No, I did not."

"You had not heard that my small property was confiscated? that I was penniless, and an exile? I beseech of you to answer me candidly. Pray let no false kindness prompt you to deceive me, Lady Carrlyon."

She looked at him in astonishment.

"My mother did indeed write to me that your property was confiscated ; but I knew no more. I longed to hear that you were—were doing well, Guido, but no word has ever reached me."

"And your husband? Have you no reason to think that Lord Carrlyon has heard of me lately? That his generosity has been roused by what he believes, however falsely, to be my great distress?"

Gilda coloured up to the temples.

"I think not. I believe I should have heard it. What has led you to this conclusion?"

"The fact that——" he stopped short. He was reluctant to speak of that little pencil-head. "No matter, it seems I was mistaken."

He felt troubled—confused. Every possible contingency passed in rapid review before his mind. The image of the dark face he had seen coming out of the opera rose up once more. Had she sought to humiliate him in the eyes of Gilda and her husband? Was it purposely to mislead him, that that sketch had accompanied the anonymous gift under which he was writhing? He passed his

hand over his brow, as these perplexing questions presented themselves.

Gilda made a step forward, and laid her trembling hand upon his arm. A shock seemed to run through his whole body. He started violently.

"You are ill, Guido. I see it. What is the matter? What does all this mean? Is it possible that you are—that you have been *in want*? How dreadful this is! You are thin and pale. Oh! Guido, I beseech of you let no foolish pride come between us now. Let my husband be your friend. If he does *not* know of your being in Paris—and I am confident he does not—tell him all, trust in him; let him help you, Guido. You will find him generous and noble, though I know you used not to like him. For my sake, Guido—the sake of your old friend—try and do so now. Only go to him yourself: let me have nothing to say to this; and I *know* he will do all in his power, Guido, to get you employment, or assist you in whatever way you most desire."

"I never sought the assistance of any human

being since I was born; and I am least of all likely to do so now. God has given me strength to fight with my own right arm, and if He wills that I shall fall now, so be it. I will never live upon the bounty or the favours of my fellow-men."

"Oh! Guido Lambertil!" she exclaimed, in a sorrowful voice, though with more force than it had yet displayed, "what must your pride appear in His sight, before whom we are as dust? How do you distort His divine decree that we should help to bear each other's burdens in this life? If all men thought as you do, would there be any possibility for the exercise of love and Christian fellowship in this world? Independence is noble, Guido; but there is something, I believe, higher and nobler still; and the pride that refuses to accept a benefit—ah!——"

"Men are variously constituted," interrupted Lamberti, with a slightly sarcastic inflection; "some find no difficulty in subsisting by the means of others. I had rather starve,—though I don't believe any man ever *did* starve who had

a tolerable head and a strong will, however great may be the hardships he goes through. This money," he took the bank-note from his pocket, "seems to scorch me as I hold it. I shall never use it; and it will weigh heavily on me, until I can return it to the unknown giver, and relieve myself of such an obligation. It is an insanity, if you will, signora; but no moral arguments are of any avail. I was born so; I cannot help it."

She looked distressed.

"What are you doing here, in Paris?"

"I am a teacher of Italian."

"At least you will let us help you in that way. My husband has a large circle of friends here," (there was a scarcely audible sigh), "and he may be able to get you pupils for the present, though I hope you will find work more worthy of your talents before long; and if my husband——"

"Say no more, I beg of you. We have known each other too long for the cold form of thanks. I know all that your generous heart would prompt; . . . nay, my belief in its influence

over Lord Carrlyon has led me into an error. But I have need of nothing. I only beg you to grant me one favour."

"What is it?"

"I have received this money anonymously.— Since you are *sure* that Lord Carrlyon did not send it—does not know of my being in Paris—oblige me by not mentioning my name to him. It would greatly add to my anxieties and annoyances, if he, in mistaken kindness, were to endeavour to find me out, or to try and assist me in any way. I repeat I want nothing but what my own brain can and *will* procure for me in time, I know. Will you, therefore, in memory of—of old times, signora, grant this one request—simply to be silent—utterly silent regarding this visit, and regarding me? I shall take steps for discovering my anonymous friend, and should I have reason to return to my *original* suspicion, I shall make a point of seeing Lord Carrlyon himself; otherwise I should wish him to remain in ignorance of the fact that I am in Paris, and that I sought

him out. Lord Carrlyon is a rich and generous Englishman ; I am a poor and proud Italian. There is nothing in common between us, you see ; and, to oblige me, signora, let him remain in utter ignorance of all that concerns me."

The colour went and came upon the young wife's cheek. She could not refuse so slight a request, put thus to her. She knew all that dictated it. She could not but own that under the circumstances it was natural that Lamberti should shrink from allowing his necessitous condition to become known to her husband ; but it was in every way painful to her to accede. She would have given—what would she not have given?—to have told Carrlyon all, and to have set him to work among his diplomatic friends to obtain some post for that rarely-gifted man. What a pure vivifying joy in her somewhat stagnant life would it have been to feel that *she* was the indirect means of placing him in a position where his great intellectual power should have been felt and appreciated ! It was not to be. He would accept nothing at her hands but silence.

O Pride! how much misery hast thou wrought! She could not bear to refuse him : yet the thought of keeping even this small thing from her husband—the very first unwhispered secret in her married life—shot like a poisoned arrow through her heart.

And it was poisoned ! poisoned with more misery than the heart of the young wife yet conceived.

CHAPTER V.

Nothing more passed between them. He left the room and walked down-stairs into the street with that quick, nervous tread which extreme physical exhaustion had of late somewhat slackened; but wherein the fever of highly-wrought excitement now found vent.

Out into the Rue de Rivoli, and along the arcade, blindly, almost madly, forcing his way along; regardless of the groups that sauntered idly there, sheltered from the wind, and in the full blaze of the mid-day sun. Regardless of every one, yet not unnaturally attracting some attention himself. He had just emerged from the porte-cochère of the hotel, when a gentleman, crossing over from the wicket in the Tuileries gardens, perceived him. Any one observing that

gentleman's handsome face would have seen surprise and curiosity, with a slight admixture of displeasure, very clearly depicted.

"How the deuce has he found me out? for he *has* found me out, of course, from his being here. Devilish awkward; he'll be always coming in, now—gratitude and so forth. One won't be able to get rid of him—and Gilda—um! What an ass I am! Poor devil! how ill he looks—and what a seedy coat! yet he looks more distinguished in his shabbiness, than all those grinning apes round him, with their polished leather boots, and Jouvin's best lavender gloves! Pah! That's a man, after all, to make a woman ——"

He is stopped short in his soliloquy by a friend, just as he is entering the hotel: and there he is kept for full two minutes, engaged in a frivolous chatter about things he doesn't care a straw for, while the things that concern his life and happiness are in abeyance. At last he breaks the thread of the gossip, and runs up-stairs. Marietta meets him at the door of her mistress' room, with her finger on her lips. My lady is very unwell—has

had a sort of faint—and is now on her bed. If my lord thinks well, she would send for the doctor. My lord does think well: but a cloud has gathered on his brow. . He questions the girl how long her mistress has been ill—whether she can account for it—has any one been with her mistress? Marietta replies without any hesitation. She found my lady on the floor a few minutes ago: to the *best of her belief*, no one had been with her, but she cannot say positively. Marietta is not a bad girl: she means no harm by this direct lie; on the contrary, she supposes it may be a kind and useful action, and among the peasants of Roman Catholic countries, a virtuous expediency supersedes all else in the code of moral ethics. She had a suspicion years ago, as all waiting-maids have, of the state of her mistress' heart: she has the most unbounded faith in that mistress' goodness and purity, but she sees how terribly this interview has overcome her. Perhaps my lord knows nothing of the circumstances? If my lady choose she can tell him. But why shall *she*, Marietta, be the one to make mischief? She

unhesitatingly tells a lie. And so the sharp little Italian, in her anxiety to spare her mistress, is partly the cause of the real mischief that ensues.

Carrlyon walked into his wife's room. She was on her bed, pale and motionless; but he took the hand that lay near him, and she gently returned its pressure. Presently she opened her eyes, and smiled faintly.

"It is nothing. I am much better now. Do not be uneasy about me, Laurence. I shall be all right again in half-an-hour."

"The doctor will be here presently. You feel no pain?"

"None. I was only faint, that was all."

He sat there in silence by the bedside, and in course of time the physician arrived. Leaving him alone with his patient for a few minutes, Carrlyon walked down to the porter's lodge.

"Did any one call for me this morning?"

"One gentleman, who, when he found milord was out, went up and saw milady."

He returned to his wife's room.

"It is nothing of any consequence," said

Dr. ——. “Nothing to interfere with—in short, you understand, nothing to make you uneasy. Quiet, quiet is the great thing, with a little regular exercise. No excitement, no fatigue, and I hope, in two months from this time, my lord——”

“Thank you, doctor.” My lord gave the physician a golden squeeze of the hand, and he vanished.

He waited in his room a whole hour, expecting his wife to send for him. She would tell him how it all happened, she would explain everything. He was a fool for being so cursedly suspicious. At length, his impatience conquering every other feeling, he returned to his wife's room. She was up now, sitting near the fire, and looking much as usual. She began talking, with what he easily detected to be a nervous anxiety to say *something*, on indifferent subjects. Where had he been? What was thought of the president's speech? &c.

He walked about the room as he replied to her, took up the bottles on the toilette-table,

pulled the brooches out of the pincushion, and dug them down again with a violent stab. Every moment he was hoping she would break the subject upon which he was waiting so impatiently to learn something: but he waited in vain. His irritation was increased by the necessity he felt of concealing from his wife the knowledge he had gained of her interview with Lamberti. In her present condition, anything like a *scene* must be avoided, he knew, and if—he shuddered at the dreadful suspicions that would force themselves upon him, and abruptly left the room again.

If this visit of Lamberti's were wholly unexpected by Gilda—if it should prove that the Italian having traced the donor of his anonymous gift, had simply called to acknowledge it,—wherefore this mystery? On the contrary, would it not be natural that he, Lord Carrlyon, should be informed at once? Had he not the porter's testimony that "*when the gentleman found my lord was out, he went up to my lady?*" The alarming state of excitement into which this visit

had evidently thrown his wife—did it not clearly show that the man was still far from being an object of indifference to her? that the subject of their conversation during this interview was of deeper interest than the acknowledgment of a paltry sum of money? Why, she had schooled even her maid into the utterance of a glib falsehood! How could it be accounted for?—Was he dreaming? He had been a jealous, suspicious ass, over and over again; but had he ever really doubted Gilda's perfect truth before? He swore to himself he never had. He was in a state of mind—a torment of doubt and self-reproach, of bitter jealousy and wrath—which men constituted like himself, of a mass of inconsistencies, can alone realize. He was for taking violent measures, one moment; the next, for treating the whole idea as the delusion of a diseased imagination. He would throw himself at her feet, and implore her to tell him all—he would promise to forgive her everything; poor child! Had she not told him the struggle she had gone through with that same fatal passion, before her marriage?

Was she to blame if the sight of this man even still overwhelmed her? It might be no more than this; ay, but the duplicity, the concealment! Should he try and make her feel something of the pangs of jealousy herself? Should he plunge into the wildest dissipation, devote himself to the Duchesse de Valentino, and neglect his wife? The thought of her sweet, pale face, and the sufferings she was soon to undergo in becoming a mother, smote him as the suggestions of his heated imagination reached this point. No! he was a brute to dream of such a pitiful revenge. When she had passed through the perils of childbirth, he would speak to his wife, dispassionately and kindly; he would point out to her the danger of cherishing anything like a sentimental feeling, which she might fancy to be purely platonic, for one who was not her husband. Above all, he would impress on her the folly of concealments. There were a great many obvious things which occurred to him, as being suitable to such a moment; and he tranquillized his mind by arranging what he would

say when the moment should arrive for that thrilling oration.

Yet it must not be supposed that his mind was at rest long. Those who best knew Carriyon would feel sure that his doubts might slumber awhile, but would rise up again like giants refreshed, and more keen-eyed than ever. Was she not Mary Caliston's daughter? Had she not the taint in her blood which sooner or later was sure to "come out?" This thought had been repeated so often in one form or another by his mother, that in certain frames of mind it assumed to Laurence all the hideous distinctness of reality. Unfortunately, the feeling that she was, however innocently, concealing something from her husband, made poor Gilda ill at ease in his presence; and his suspicions were thus strengthened that, whatever the nature of her interview with Guido might have been, the old love in her heart was not extinct. The interview itself was possibly accidental and innocent enough; but she could not trust herself to speak of it, and that was sufficient! . After brooding

over the subject for a day and a night, he had reduced all his wild suspicions into some such form as this.

And then he received a note, the form and tenor of which somewhat surprised him.

CHAPTER VI.



THE Duchesse de Valentino sat in her boudoir late in the afternoon of the same day on which Guido had paid his visit to the Hôtel de la Terrasse. She was denied to visitors in general; but one visitor was now with her, to whom she never was denied. A grave, middle-aged man, quietly dressed, and conspicuously unremarkable (to use a daring antithesis) in every respect. He stood opposite to where the duchesse sat, and had a note-book in his hand, to which he frequently referred.

“Since I saw madame two days ago,” said this individual, “Monsieur Lamberti has made twelve fresh applications for employment at publishers’, newspaper-offices, schools, and colleges, but without success. At one of the latter for young ladies,

in the Chaussée d'Autin, to which he procured an introduction, he was very nearly engaged (as I learnt from the servant), but his good looks stood in his way. He did, however," continued the speaker, correcting himself by his note-book, "receive two francs for translating an article in the *Monitore Toscano* for a newspaper here, and it is possible he may occasionally get employment there again. I followed him half over Paris yesterday. He did not reach home until past seven o'clock, very much exhausted, for he had eaten scarcely anything all day. He had a conversation with the portress before going upstairs; and from where I stood in the shadow of the archway, I could hear what passed. It appears that a gentleman had called in his absence, and had left a piece of paper. Monsieur Lamberti made several inquiries concerning this gentleman, and appeared perplexed and annoyed."

There was a pause, and the lady said sharply,—

"You must find out who it was. You've ways of doing that, I suppose?"

"This morning, rather later than usual,"

continued the man, imperturbably, "Monsieur Lamberti left his house; and, contrary to all his usual habits, breakfasted at the café opposite. He had a——"

"Never mind what he had. Go on."

"He then proceeded to Messrs. Galignani's; where, I imagine, he procured an address he wanted. After that he went straight to the Hôtel de la Terrasse."

The duchesse did not start, but she grew ghastly white, and set her teeth hard.

"Good—well? and what then?"

"Apparently the person he called to see was not at home. I watched him from the opposite side of the street. He stood under the archway hesitating for some minutes, until a young woman, a *femme de chambre* I should suppose, passed by. There was a recognition, and after a few words Monsieur Lamberti followed the girl upstairs. He remained there nine minutes and a quarter by my watch. He walked homewards at a pace which rendered it difficult for me to keep him in sight, without attracting notice by running.

But when within a few doors of his own house, his pace suddenly slackened. I observed him stagger, and thought some one had pushed against him, but the next moment he caught hold of the wall to prevent himself falling. He put his hand to his mouth, and when he removed it, it was stained with blood. Two of the passers-by stopped,—one of them was a medical student,—and then I came up, and together we supported him home. We took him upstairs and laid him on his bed. He was too weak now to offer any resistance, and the blood prevented his speaking when he attempted it.”

“You didn’t leave him in that state?” gasped the duchesse, in a hoarse voice.

“The student succeeded after some time in stopping the hemorrhage, and then we left him in the care of the old portress, a motherly sort of woman, who promised to look after him. The student enjoined his taking all the nourishment possible, at which the old woman shrugged her shoulders and shook her head. Seeing how the case stood (which, indeed, Monsieur Lambert’s

appearance might have told him before), the young man then suggested that if there were any return of the blood-spitting, the stranger should be conveyed to one of the hospitals, where he would have the best food and constant attention. At the word hospital a shudder seemed to run through Monsieur Lamberti's whole frame. One would have supposed there was some terrible recollection connected with it, but he said nothing. The student remarked to me as we came away, that if the man we had just left continued his life of toil and privation, it was evident that nothing could save him, 'and it will be very rapid work, moreover,' he added."

There was a silence of some minutes. Whatever the duchesse felt, she managed to maintain an outward semblance of calm, as she shaded her face with the hand on which she leant. The man, having said apparently all that he had to say, stood patient and imperturbable opposite, like a clock that is run down, and waits to be wound up, before it again performs its intricate daily work.

"You need not return to your post before the afternoon of to-morrow. In his present condition, Monsieur Lamberti is clearly unable to leave the house. If anything of importance should occur after that time, you will let me know at once."

She made a slight movement with her head, and then rang the hand-bell beside her. A footman appeared, and the individual—belonging to a class which is supposed only to exist in romance, but which is common enough in Paris—passed from her presence without another word.

As he left the room, her head sank upon the table.

"Fool that I was! I have waited too long. Oh, my God! If death should rob me of him *now*—now, when the moment seemed ripe for all my plans! When I have struggled for wealth and power to help him; to soften his heart by gratitude towards me, as men struggle to win women!—and all to end in this. Death! death! Oh, horrible!—and such a death! Had it been there at Peschiera, long ago, in the silent night-watches, when his head lay unconsciously on my

bosom, and I nursed him as a mother does her child; oh! I could have borne his dying, then; yes, for then I expected it! But now, when the only hope that sustained me in this hideous, miserable mockery of life was the hope of *him*—that he should be snatched away! It cannot be too late: it shall not be! I must take a decisive step at once. . . . But this interview with *her*. What does it mean? I know his pride too well to think he would ever have applied for assistance from *them*, in any shape; and that conceited fool, Carrlyon, would never have asked him there. What does it mean? I must see to this. I thought that creature was swept out of my path. Let her look how she crosses it again. This time she will be *crushed!*”

The expression of vindictive hatred on her face as she raised her head, contrasted strongly with passionate sorrow depicted there, as that face had fallen between her hands a few minutes since.

She rose, and summoning her maid, exchanged her sumptuous dress for one of very homely material. A shabby bonnet and thick double

veil concealed her features completely. The maid was accustomed to these metamorphoses, and not the least surprised. She was, moreover, a model of discretion, as the maid of any Duchesse de Valentino need be. Her mistress stepped down a back stair into the court, and was soon lost in the crowded streets.

It was quite dusk when she reached the Rue du Bac. Contrary to her expectation, she found the old portress seated before her pan of embers, brewing a *tisane* for her patient upstairs. Without apology, the veiled lady opened the glass door, behind which she caught sight of this pleasant picture, and entering, closed the door again.

"Pardon, madame," she began, in the gentlest of voices, without raising her impenetrable veil. "Pardon, madame; but I am come to have some conversation with you relative to a lodger you have upstairs; in whom I take a deep interest."

"*Tiens*," said the old woman, eyeing her from her head to her foot, with shrewd scrutiny. "And who may that be, madame?"

"The poor young Italian teacher, Monsieur

Lamberti, who is now ill, and whom you have been so kindly nursing."

"*C'est drôle, pourtant,*" replied the other, shrugging her shoulders. "If he *has* friends, why do they not prevent his starving? You none of you trouble your heads until he is nearly dead, and now, within twenty-four hours, you are the second who come here inquiring about him!"

The lady was hardly able to control herself sufficiently to say in a careless tone,—

"The second? Ah! the first was his—his cousin, I suppose?"

"*Soyez tranquille, ma bonne petite dame.* It was a *gentleman*," answered the portress, regarding her visitor with a knowing twinkle and a nod; "whatever his relationship was; *mais que voulez-vous?* his help came too late. The poor young man——"

"Ah! so he *did* help him?"

"Who said so?" said the old woman, angry at having let slip the avowal. "How am I to know whether he helped him? I only know that he called, and left a paper, and that the young

man went out this morning, and was brought home very ill; so that the gentleman's visit don't seem to have done much good, anyhow."

"No, madame, and the reason is plain enough. Your lodger prefers starving, strange to say, to living upon money given him in charity. I will manage better, with your assistance. Get him the strongest *bouillon* you can, from the *café* opposite; and I shall trust to you, madame, to make him take it. If you can force some wine down his throat so much the better. Invent any lie you like to pacify him; but see that his strength is supported during the next few hours, and I will call again early to-morrow. It is better that I should not see him to-night."

She threw a Napoleon on the table; then turned, as she was leaving the room, to add,—

"I see you are a woman of discretion. I need not impress on you the necessity of keeping my visit here a secret. You will have no reason to repent doing so, if you will follow my wishes. Is he less suffering this evening?"

"He is asleep at this moment, madame;" then,

as her visitor passed out, and closed the door behind her, "Ha! ha! *ma bonne petite dame*, so you are in love with him, are you—a pair of fine flashing black eyes, through your veil! and a real lady, too, for all she is dressed like a simple *bourgeoise*. Did I not see the Valenciennes on that corner of her handkerchief that peeped out? *Je m'y connais dans les dentelles, moi!* I wasn't in Madame Bertin's shop, as a girl, for nothing. And these great ladies, with their fancies for some poor fellow, who is far below them, don't I know all about it? Was I not right? Said I not so? *S'il était seulement bien nourri, il aurait des bonnes fortunes, celui-là! Pas de doute!*"

The lady who was the object of this just surmise walked home, tolerably satisfied with the result of the interview. Guido was in good hands with the kindly old portress: as to his visitor, it was easy to guess now who he was, and though she could not divine the motive of his visit, her jealous uneasiness was thus allayed.

By what cunning wiles the old woman persuaded her patient to swallow the nutriment she brought

him from time to time, I scarcely know. There was a fable that the surgeon (he was a young medical student in reality) who had so opportunely come to Lamberti's assistance, belonged to the neighbouring hospital, where out-door relief was furnished, and that he sent these good things for the sick man. The conscious necessity of regaining strength before he could do anything prevailed, perhaps, more than every argument in inducing Guido to swallow them. It may seem inconsistent that he should so readily have succumbed to accepting charity in this form, after his extreme sensitiveness on the point, when presented to him anonymously, and in another shape. But in the first place, it may safely be advanced that many a man feels less humiliation in being the recipient of a great public charity, than in lying under a heavy obligation to one private individual. Add to this that, in Guido's case, the only two persons from whom his imagination could suggest this bounty to proceed, were the very last two on earth from whom he would willingly have received the smallest favour. It becomes less surprising, then,

that while that bank-note lay untouched upon his table, he refused neither Burgundy nor Bouillon at the hands of the old portress.

The morning came, and with it the veiled lady. It would have seemed more natural that this singular visit should take place in the dusk of evening rather than the full morning light. But Sara was anxious to seize the very first moment that his strength would permit it, to have the interview with Lamberti which she now began to fear she had delayed too long. The time for concealments was over: it was a hard reality, what she had in hand now, and it was not unbecoming that this should have the clear and searching light of day.

Had she fully arranged all that she was to say in this interview? Perhaps not. She trusted chiefly to the overwhelming strength of her position, and the force of her impassioned eloquence on the spur of the moment. But inasmuch as she had been looking forward to this moment for months past, she could hardly be said to be unprepared. She had followed, though at a distance, his every step in Italy—she had tracked him to Paris,

she had dogged him day by day, and watched his manly but ineffectual struggle; and she had waited as a falcon hovers above his prey, for the moment when his strength and fortitude should be reduced to the lowest ebb. Had she not waited too long?

Ah! That was the question.

CHAPTER VII.

HE had passed a good night, the portress said ; and he was now up and dressed, and had had some coffee, though it was scarcely eight o'clock. But he was still so weak that he could not walk across the room without the aid of a stick, and had been forced to acknowledge with a groan that it would be useless to attempt going out that day.

So much the old woman communicated below to her visitor. It was then arranged that they should both go up together, to avoid any difficulties, and that while Sara remained outside the old woman was to go into the room and prepare him for the reception of *a friend*.

The plan worked well. Sara, with a beating heart, as she listened outside the door, heard the

few questions and answers that passed within. That voice, once so deep and rich, now hollow and broken, interrupted at intervals by a hard cough; it made her shudder as she heard it. Then there was a pause; the old woman's heavy step moved over the room, smoothing the things for the visitor's reception,—now drawing a bed-curtain, now removing the remains of the sick man's breakfast; and then, throwing open the door with a cheerful nod of the head, she bade the visitor enter. When she closed it after her again, I will not undertake to say that her curiosity may not have prompted her to linger round it rather longer than was necessary. But if so she was disappointed, for the conversation inside was carried on entirely in Italian.

He was looking anxiously towards the door, and when he saw a woman enter he started; then slowly rose from his chair, and remained standing. She raised her veil, and an expression of acute annoyance crossed his face.

"Are you surprised to see me, Guido?" she began. "Did I not tell you that in any crisis of

your life I should be near you? and have you not reached one now?"

"I was aware that you were in Paris," he replied, coldly; "and perhaps it is your generosity, madam, that suggested this anonymous gift?" he pointed to the bank-note on the table. "If so——"

"Do you suppose I would insult you by sending you a paltry alms anonymously? You must look to your noble friends the Carrlyons for this sort of child's play. I know you too well for that. If you made up your mind to accept money under any strong vital necessity you would not try and blind yourself to the fact, or think the obligation less because you didn't know where it came from."

"You are right. *Were* I ever induced to accept money, I had far rather know to whom I might honestly feel I owed the debt; but the Lambertis have not been used to live on charity. If you know positively, therefore, that Lord Carrlyon——"

"I told him of your being in Paris, and of

your present calling and mode of life. I know nothing more. I did not come here," she added impatiently, "to talk of the Carrlyons, but to speak of yourself; to appeal to you in this juncture earnestly and solemnly. There is no use disguising the fact, if you do not change your course of living, if you work and *starve* as you have been doing, your life must fall a sacrifice! You will tell me, as you did once before, that is worth very little. God who created you apparently thinks otherwise, or you would not have been spared through every peril and pestilence! Do you know what it is you are doing? You are deliberately *committing suicide*. This is not a virtue; it is a crime; and more to you who have boasted principles and moral courage, it is a *cowardice*, which is only pardonable in us wretched women. Now listen to me. Don't reply till you have heard me," she exclaimed more passionately. "I come to offer once more what may be a means of salvation to you in this world—to me, perhaps, in another! You are ruined in fortune, broken in health, exiled, name-

less, friendless. Do you still reject the offer of a heart devoted to you? of one who would sacrifice all in this world and the next for your sake? Am I insane? Was there ever a woman who loved a man after this fashion before? Is it an ordinary passion that made me sacrifice all womanly pride in acknowledging long ago to a love that was not returned? I know I am at present nothing to you; but I only say suffer me to be near you for awhile—to work for you, watch for you—if necessary, starve for you! It cannot be but that in time you would grow to pity, and so, perhaps, to love, the woman whose hand smoothed your pillow, whose eyes knew no rest for you, who toiled and conquered in this warfare for existence, where you, Guido, have fought a man's fight, and failed! Yes, I am rich now; but do not think I would insult you by using such an argument as this of wealth. I would do no more than implore you to take such a portion of it as should support your present wants. The rest—rank, position—everything to which I have risen—I would thankfully sacrifice,

and count it gain, to come and work my fingers to the bone in this miserable garret!"

She clasped her hands before her face, and stood trembling there. A bright spot had been rising in Guido's cheek during the latter part of this extraordinary speech, and there was an indignant flash in his eye, as he replied,—

"I should have used another term than *rising*, had I been you. I don't ask whether the title you bear be honestly yours: I don't seek to know how much or how little you are culpable, according to men's standard of morality; but *I*, too, have heard somewhat of *your* life, of your habits and associates; of the wiles by which you have induced men to supply you with large sums of money, while no love—no! not one particle of love was in your heart! This I take to be the prostitution of the *soul*! whether the body be an accessory to it or not. Compared with this, the trade of half the poor women in the world is virtue! And it is money *thus* gained that you would offer an honest man!

It is a heart thus polluted you do me the honour to say has always been devoted to me!

“Oh, Guido! Guido! do not crush me to the earth!” cried the wretched woman, throwing her arms up wildly in the air. “Do not despise me utterly! If you only knew half of what I have suffered! The loathing, the utter disgust and weariness with which I have gone through it all, night after night, month after month! That horrible craving for power possessed me, which those alone who have been poor and dependent, know! But I call God to witness, that it was no delight to me! It never gave me a moment’s pleasure, and I only waited for the moment when I might fling it all aside. Don’t be too hard on me! If I am abased in my own eyes and in yours, remember it is you who have wrought this! When I had watched you day and night at Peschiera, and that you drove me finally away from you, did I not warn you whither I should be driven? Oh! Guido, you are cold and passionless! have

pity on a nature which is only capable of love or hatred—good or evil—in extremes !”

“The passion which your imagination, rather than your heart, has conceived, resembles the terrible curse of one of the heathen fates. It is not *love* ! Love—love worthy of the name—purifies and strengthens through all calamity. It binds up every wound in this world, and enables us to bear all—save loss of honour, with resignation. This is the only thing between man and woman which can endure, and which raises their passion above that of the beasts of the field. Such a tie, under no conditions, could exist between us ; since the essential element of it is wanting ; and *that* no pity or gratitude could foster into growth. Has this dream-passion guarded you from temptation ? Has it elevated your desires, ennobled your nature, enlarged your charity ? If it has done none of these, and according to your own showing, it has only helped to degrade you, it is no more than a diseased fancy !”

“It *is* disease, madness, the terrible curse

of fate—call it what you will—but there it is! It throbs in every vein. It riots in my blood, it renders me no longer mistress of my own actions; and my redemption lies in you! Oh, Guido! don't cast me away now and for ever! Have pity on me, for God's sake! Put me through any probation, only don't send me back to that hideous life! Save me—save me from it, for you only can do so!”

She flung herself upon her knees before him in a frenzy of despair. Who would have recognized in this abject woman, the insolent Duchesse de Valentino, hard, brilliant and domineering? The scalding tears rained thick upon his hand, as he endeavoured to raise her.

“You ask what is impossible. Why renew this painful subject. If you are minded to abandon the life you are leading, what is there to prevent you? Do you understand the real meaning of *repentance*? Do you think that God is a man to be deceived, as you would try to deceive yourself and me, into the belief that you cannot quit this life you loathe, that you

cannot be regenerated, but under the influence of another weak and erring human being like yourself? I should be mocking God were I to assist in your self-deception that true repentance could have any part in this insane passion! For myself I have lived a lonely man, and such I shall die. God has been merciful to *me*, may He be so to you! There was a time—not far distant—when I had no faith, scarce any hope in a future state. I thank Him that He has given me *that*, when everything else has been taken away. It will make the passage from this life to another a happy release when it comes, whether now, or——”

“You are dying—dying!” almost shrieked Sara. “Oh, my God! Listen to him! He knows it, and he will not let me be with him to receive his last breath, to—to—oh, Guido! you are hard—you are cruel! God is more merciful than you are! He has pity, but you have none! He can forgive sins, but you will neither forget nor forgive!”

He waited till the violence of her hysterical

sobs had somewhat abated again before he replied more gently—

“The pity or forgiveness of men is worth very little; you have both, Sara, from me. But turn to God who judges not as man judges: may He who sees what your temptations have been, purify your heart, and strengthen you to lead a new life. Lay the axe to the root of the tree yourself—no one else can for you. And as this is the last time we must meet—yes! understand, it *must* be the last—I would beg of you to lay my words to heart as those of a dying man, and to act upon them when I am gone!”

The sobs had ceased: she remained for some minutes quite silent and motionless, her head buried in her hands. It would have been impossible to say what thoughts were passing through the darkened, troubled brain of the unhappy woman. Slowly, she let her hands drop at last, and slowly, falteringly, she murmured, without looking up,

“My life has been a burden to me hitherto, and how shall I support it *now*? Is there any

rest to be found in this world—any waters of oblivion that I may drink and forget the past? There is none! I have no hope, no courage, no strength to cast off this chain that weighs me down. And yet—you say well—anything were better than to struggle longer under it. If you have any faith in the efficacy of prayer, pray for me, Guido Lamberti. All seems dark before me!” She shuddered, and pressed her hands to her eyes, as if to shut out some dreadful vision; then rose quickly to her feet. “Swear to pray for me to-night, *that I may not be cursed for ever!*”

Her face was ghastly white, and the bloodless lips quivered as she spoke: but the deep, hollow eyes had drunk back their tears again, and looked as though carved in black marble—utterly lifeless.

“I will,” he replied, solemnly. “Not to-night only, but every night, as long as I live. God be merciful to us both!”

“Amen!”

She was gone. Without another word, without another look, that strange being turned and fled from the room. Down-stairs, and across the

court, past the portress' open door, and out into the street, with her head bent down, and her veil muffled close about it, she rushed blindly on.

And the hard metallic tone of that "Amen," rang, like a knell, in the ears of the sick man all day long.

CHAPTER VIII.



It was in the afternoon of this day that Carrlyon received the following lines :—

“MY LORD,

“PERMIT me to return a note of five hundred francs, which, if I am not mistaken, your sympathy for a poor exile prompted you to leave here anonymously. It is true that I am very poor, and that my health has suffered under fatigue and privation, but if God wills it, these clouds will pass away. My wants are few ; my courage not easily daunted. Between man and God, the basis of all faith is dependence. Between man and man, the basis of all respect is independence. This being established as a principle in

my mind, you will pardon the apparent ingratitude of one, who, in declining your generosity, begs to subscribe himself,

“Your lordship’s

“Grateful and obedient servant,

“GUIDO LAMBERTI.”

“Let him starve, then, if he chooses it!” said Carrlyon, as he flung the letter on the table amid a heap of others, bills, cards, etcetera. “The prig! with his moral axioms about ‘the basis of all respect!’ I should think the basis was *existence*, having a self to respect at all, which he won’t have long I imagine, at this rate. He manages even in his letter to give himself those d——d airs of superiority which used to chafe me so. Well! I suppose it was absurd of me, thinking I could help a man like that. Shall I show the letter to Gilda? As she chooses to make a mystery of his having been here, perhaps I’d better not. It may send her into hysterics again, so I must endure this pleasant state of things until after—— Hem! what incom-

prehensible creatures women are! If I really believed now—by G—d! if I thought my mother was right—if ——”

He walked straight out of the house, and up and down the wet streets—for it was raining and now quite dark—until dinner. He then came in, and sat opposite his wife's pale, anxious face for awhile, but scarcely addressed her. She was accustomed to variations of temper now—to fits of moodiness and depression—and she always attributed them to the baneful influence of a letter from his mother. But she could not exert herself to-day, as she generally did, to dispel this gloom. Her own heart was very heavy; the image of Guido's worn, emaciated face, the sound of his hollow cough, haunted her like a nightmare. She could not get rid of it by day or night; and the more she thought of him, more and more dark grew her forebodings. Had it not been for her promise, oh, how thankfully would she have poured her griefs into her husband's bosom, and made him a partner in her anxieties on Guido's account. She knew that

he *was* generous, he would certainly exert himself in Lamberti's behalf, if he only could be aware of the latter's present condition. In her own larger nobility of soul, she felt sure that any petty jealousy of the past would be forgotten by her husband in this great and distressing emergency. But alas! she knew too well all the Italian's indomitable pride. Even had she broken her word to him, he would refuse Laurence's assistance in any shape; she had seen how bitter the supposition of such assistance had been to him. She must wait a day or two. If she only knew where he was! If she could only find out *how* he was! Then she would better know how to act.

Had either husband or wife as they sat there spoken out on the subject which was engrossing both, ah! how different might the future of at least one of them have been! But they were both silent.

Lord Carrlyon after a time started up, and walked to the fire. He was restless, irritable; he must do something. What is there going on to-night? A ball anywhere? He seizes two or

three cards of invitation on the mantel-piece. The Duchesse de Valentino has a great reception. Why shouldn't he go there?

This is a night of unusual triumph for the duchesse, so people say. She has reached the zenith of her power and ambition; having succeeded in getting many of the great French ladies and nearly all the foreign ones to accept her position and her hospitalities. Those who have still any scruples will at all events lose a very amusing fête; for of course every *man* worth knowing in Paris will be there, and nothing that money and taste can procure to make the evening brilliant will be spared. The duchesse herself has been locked up in her own room all day, and not even her maid has been admitted when she has knocked. Let them make what arrangements they will, she says, so they do not trouble her. At length that important functionary the *coiffeur* arrives, and the dress from *Camille's*, which seems to be a miracle of mist and dew-drops. The duchesse's door is unbarred, and the elaborate ceremony of the toilette

is in time completed, to the satisfaction of the *femme de chambre*. The duchesse is always pale, and to-night when she enters her *salon*, she is scarcely more so than usual. Her eyes are unusually brilliant, assisted, perhaps, by the flash and sparkle of the diamonds in her hair.

"Certainly a most striking-looking woman!" says our friend Mrs. Smith (who in spite of her moral diatribes, has found her way here at last; 'for you know one must relax the rule a *little* abroad'), "not exactly handsome, Lord Carrlyon, eh? but very striking. Quite one's idea of Judith, now!"

"Which would account for her *striking* appearance."

"And then those diamonds," continued the lady, heedless of the joke; "they quite make one's mouth water! The Russian ambassadress's, you see, are nothing to them. By-the-by, it's a great comfort to see two or three of the embassies here, ain't it? Makes one feel, you know, more at home: for one didn't exactly know *who* one was to meet. So sorry dear Lady Carrlyon

wasn't well enough to come. She'd have enjoyed it."

"I rather doubt that," replied his lordship, drily; then, as he caught sight of a sallow, melancholy face, "Hallo, Razzi! my dear fellow, —delighted to see you. How long have you been in Paris? I heard you were here."

"A few days," replied the Italian. "I am like the moths who have burnt their wings, and still keep buzzing round the light!" The image was not very novel, and there is reason to believe it had become a stock phrase in the mouth of the poor man, whose flights of fancy were few and feeble, but he smiled a wan smile at his own joke. "Yes, I called here, and she sent me a card for this evening. It was almost more than I expected of her, after her treatment of me: but you see, *caro mio*, I am a fool about the woman. I can't help it—I hadn't seen her for more than a year. *Che vuole?*"

"And how long is it since you saw our friend the marchesa? Tell me somewhat about her. Where is she?"

"Back again at Bologna, poor woman, and leading much the same life as usual. Through her connection with one of the cardinals, who is her uncle, they overlooked the part she took in the war; but the old *Lupo*, who is *Papista* to the backbone, has been inveterate against her ever since, and they live now quite apart. The Piedmontese cousin—by-the-by, you remember him?—was killed at Novaro, and she was dreadfully cut up—has never recovered her spirits since. Poor marchesa! she is very much changed in appearance, too. I saw her as I passed through Bologna—but, you understand, that it is not quite the most desirable residence for *me* just now. I am obliged to keep quiet—to keep out of the way for a time." He nodded and winked expressively; and then, as he looked in the direction of the duchesse, added, "Tell me, milord, if you can, who is the fair man talking to her?"

"A cousin of mine—a good-looking fellow—but you needn't be afraid, Razzi: *he ain't rich.*"

The duchesse was surrounded by a crowd of worshippers, foremost among whom was young Fitzhugh. They were evidently urging vehemently some request which the divinity was indisposed to grant. On approaching the group, Carrlyon and Razzi found that expectation had been greatly raised by the duchesse's name appearing in a programme among those of some of the best *artistes* in Paris, who were to sing in the course of the evening. Now, however, with what was supposed to be the *caprice d'une grande dame* she declined to fulfil the expectation thus raised. And to those who had never heard her, it was felt that Frezzolini and Gardoni might redouble their exertions in vain : the disappointment would still be great. There was a knot of very fine ladies on a sofa, hard-by. One of them, an affected little Frenchwoman, actually rose and began supplicating their hostess with many grimaces not to "desolate" them by persisting in her unkindness. Carrlyon laughed in his sleeve. "Well done, Sara Gisborne : they fool you to the top of your bent." And it was true that there

was no mistaking the cold smile of triumph on that hard marble face.

A personage was now announced, however, and approached the group, before whom even the duchesse's obduracy had to give way. Perhaps, indeed, I am inclined to think, she had waited purposely for this moment to cede. The gentleman was short, and not well-favoured. He was remarkable for a pair of small keen eyes, an aquiline nose, under cover of which, all the other features seemed trying to escape detection, and a moustache, that to the fanciful view might appear to be standing on end at its owner's audacity. His voice was soft, and his manner extremely agreeable—at least, so all those he addressed seemed to think. One or two of the Faubourg St. Germain ladies, however, gathered up the skirts of their dresses as he passed, blandly bowing right and left; and while they turned their heads in a diametrically opposite direction, one of them murmured to the other, "*Manières de boutiquier !*"

The gentleman then—whoever he was, we will not more particularly inquire—succeeded where

others had failed. Report said that he didn't care a button for pretty music, but very much for a pretty woman. To watch the graceful undulating movement of the dark-eyed duchesse, as yielding her assent with a strange half-bitter smile, she moved towards the piano and began turning over some music, no doubt repaid him in itself.

"Shall I tell you what you are thinking of?" she said, in an under-voice to Carrlyon, who happened to be standing near, and was looking at her. She contrived to draw him a little apart as she spoke.

"No doubt you could interpret the thoughts of every man here," said he bowing, and smiling.

"Perhaps I could—no matter: I know *yours*. You were thinking of me, as I was two years ago—a penniless slave in the house of taskmasters I hated. Do you think I was happier, then? Happier and more innocent than I am now? Oh! you—you needn't have any scruples in saying so. Of course I know perfectly well what the world *thinks*—and yet you see the world goes down

upon its knees. For, as long as it's amused, the world will worship anything!" She laughed scornfully; and while the Englishman cast about in his mind what reply it behoved him to make to this extraordinary address, the duchesse continued: "But you are wrong, if you think I have ever known what it was to be happy or innocent. All that, you see, I meant to come *after*—and it hasn't come. Whatever I have since done, I had well determined to do in those days, Lord Carrlyon, and the power that I fought for, I have got. Well; there is a satisfaction in seeing the world that kicked and spurned you—and your mother before you—cringing and licking your hand."

"Oh, yes! certainly," replied Carrlyon, beginning to feel rather uncomfortable at the lady's vehemence, though she still spoke in a low voice.

"But as certain evil instincts are transmitted from mother to child, it is as well that I have no children, you see. That curse which you pronounce in your Decalogue with such fervency every Sunday is very literally fulfilled, in one

shape or another; and, as far as I am able to judge, neither physicians of the body or soul are able to offer any antidote to it."

Carrlyon started. The words were an echo, only stronger and deeper, of the unspoken thoughts in his own breast; as whispers breathed in a vast cavern reverberate with twice their original force. Yet an instant after he rejoined,—

"Your views are very cynical, Madame la Duchesse, and hardly borne out by facts. We have all of us heard of the virtuous children of very bad parents, and the world would be much worse even than it is, if we were reaping all the accumulated vices of our ancestors."

"It wasn't to discuss the point, I spoke thus," said the lady, rapidly; "or I should beg you to look at more than half the great families in your own country, in which madness, consumption, or scrofula, are the inheritance of their ancestors' vices. As to the *moral* part of the question I haven't time to enter upon that. Why I spoke on the subject at all, is because it so happens, curiously enough, that I haven't *one friend in the*

world! Your wife and her mother are the persons I have known longest; but there were reasons why it was impossible we should ever be *friends*. You, however, now belong to them, and I have known you *two* whole years!—a long time in my Bohemian life. I feel more inclined to trust you, therefore, than any one else here; for I think you're kind-hearted, and that when you hear the world, which you now see at my feet, heaping dirt upon my head, as they will when I am gone, that you will only say that the *sins of fathers are visited on their children*. Repeat that to Mrs. Courteney, and she will not refuse to forgive me, though I deserve no good at her hands."

"I will certainly tell her what you wish; but you are not thinking of leaving Paris, surely, duchesse?"

"Who knows? There comes a time when one is sick even of such triumphs as these," she replied, with a harsh laugh. "You will not be surprised if you hear I have decamped some morning, and no one will know where I am gone! And now, what shall I sing?"

She turned round and asked her question aloud. Mrs. Smith immediately, in a pleading voice, began,—

“I have heard so much of your singing Pio Nono’s hymn,—quite carries one away, I’m told. Do, please, let us hear it.”

“It would be an anachronism now. I used to sing it,” her eye fell on Razzi at that moment: his pale face was fixed on hers—“I used to sing it at a time when we all had delusions in Italy which have now passed away.”

“Sing that air from the *Nina, Pazzo per l’amore*, you sang to us the other night, duchesse,” said a young attaché. “You threw such passion into it; I really never heard anything half so fine—quite like the real thing.”

“What does a boy like you know of the real thing?” said the lady, turning those glow-worm eyes upon him, that seemed to expand with light, and then suddenly contract again. “Perhaps I might sing it too much like the real thing. I don’t think it would amuse the people here to see a woman going mad for love. Besides, I’m

not up to any great air to-night. I will sing you a simple *romance*, where my vanity will not be wounded by coming into competition with Madame Frezzolini."

It was *L'Ange Déchu*, that touching ballad, the words of which may have struck some few in that assemblage who thought about the words at all, as *possibly* applicable to the unknown story of the strange woman who sang them. There was a depth of despair in that deep voice as she uttered the last verse, which drew tears from more than one listener.

"Je pars, hélas, deception profonde !
On me dédaigne, et mes vœux, mes soupirs
N'ont pas sauvé de l'océan du monde
Quelques débris des plus doux souvenirs.
Pale et tremblant devant ce front sévère,
Je perds l'espoir ici bas, mon seul bien.
Il—il me hait, cette enfant de la terre,
Dont le Seigneur m'avait fait le gardien."

Others looked at each other and raised their eyebrows.

"What a great actress she would make!" said one.

"She is, you mean," replied another. "There's no real feeling in all that; it's a mere matter of art."

"I can't believe it," said a third. "Look at her now; she can't shake off the impression of the song. She is really the embodiment of a lost, despairing soul!"

It was generally observed, indeed, that a singular change—whether real or affected—had come over the duchess after giving this song. In reply to the vociferous compliments lavished on all sides, she coldly bowed her head. No expression of gratified vanity illuminated her features. She moved through the rooms, omitting no act of ceremonious politeness to her guests, with the same stony demeanour. Men asked each other whether this was the brilliant woman they were accustomed to see? She passed from group to group with that white face, and gliding motion, urbane and graceful, but all the fire and sparkle of her daring repartee dead!

There was none of the formality of a concert. People were scattered through the rooms; in one

of which knots of grave politicians and men on the Bourse—Monsieur Réal among these—were playing at whist. The stakes were high, to judge by the piles of gold on each table. The ill-natured, indeed, asserted that gambling was always one of the great attractions at the duchess's to a certain set who frequented her salons. For those who were neither musicians nor gamblers, the diversion of a conjuror had been provided on this occasion: and a large portion of the society were now enjoying the enchantment of finding their pocket-handkerchiefs suspended to the chandelier—their rings transferred to the conjuror's pocket.

I must not dwell on the culminating point of the entertainment—the gorgeous supper. When the folding-doors were thrown open, and the company streamed into an apartment glittering with plate and light and flowers, it was pretty generally felt that a woman who had such taste in all her arrangements might well be pardoned some peccadillos. She led the way, leaning on the arm of her most distinguished guest. Hence-

forward her position was established. Would it not be folly to ignore a woman who gave the best parties in Paris? If the duchess were not triumphant that evening, it was no fault of her public.

But the most brilliant and successful evening must come to an end. The company began to ooze away gradually into the ante-room; and then the rumble of coaches under the *porte-cochère* below announced that the first departures had taken place. And among the first was Carrlyon. He felt tired and dispirited, and the duchess' words still rang in his ears. As regarded herself, his sentiments had undergone a change that evening which he would have believed to be wholly impossible a few hours before. Since he had a glimpse of the wretchedness and hopelessness that was festering under that hard, insolent exterior, he felt the most profound pity for a woman whom education and circumstances had perhaps tended to make what she was. He shook hands with her kindly, as he afterwards gladly remembered, and her last words were,—

"You will probably hear from me to-morrow."

It was some time yet before the whist-players and knots of men scattered through the rooms dispersed. Contrary to her wont, the duchess pressed none of them to remain. The circle of habitués felt that this stream of wit and anecdote, which generally flowed uninterruptedly, at this hour, was chilled; and with profuse compliments and congratulations upon the brilliant success of her first great reception, they took leave of the duchess, and repaired to their club to finish the night, and descant on the strange demeanour of their capricious divinity.

And now at last she was alone. The candles had burnt low in their sockets, the flowers were drooping from the heat of the room, vestiges of the great assemblage lay everywhere around her, in the strange disarray of the furniture; here an odd glove; there the artificial rose-bud from a dress; cards and counters on the floor—crumpled programmes everywhere.

She walked the whole length of that magnifi-

cent suite of rooms and back again. As she did so, the hard white mask having dropped aside, her features worked convulsively, until catching sight of her own face in one of the long pier-glasses as she passed, she started, and approached it. Once before, two years ago, she had scanned her own face thus in the mirror, and had tried to read then what the future had in store for her. And now—what had the future in store for her? What?

The groom of the chambers entering, with some of the footmen, to put out the lights, was surprised to find his mistress standing before a mirror, with her arms wildly clasped above her head. She dropped them quickly, and in another moment had entered her own apartment, and locked the door: nor would she admit her maid, saying she had no occasion for her services.

* * * * *

Towards noon the following day, having tried ineffectually to obtain any answer at her mistress's door, the maid communicated her alarm to the men-servants, and the door was broken open.

They found the duchess lying upon her bed quite dead. She was still in her gorgeous dress of the previous night; and in her tight-clenched hand she held a small bottle, which was labelled "Prussic-acid."

CHAPTER IX.

THE noise it made was great for a few days : the motives to which it was attributed were various. But the event was too common in Paris for it to take hold of the public imagination, as it would in this country. By many it was looked on, no doubt, as the proper melodramatic termination to an erratic career. One heard very little horror expressed at the crime, or pity for the unhappy perpetrator of it, but plenty of gossiping details as to the distribution of her jewels and money, for which, as we shall see presently, she left very minute instructions.

A packet was found upon the table, directed to Lord Carrlyon. And as this was transmitted at once to his address by the head-servants (while others communicated with the police), he received

very early the tragical confirmation of her parting words that he would hear of her to-morrow !

The packet contained a note requesting him to administer to her last wishes, as he was the person in whom she felt the most confidence. Enclosed was a document, the signature to which had been attested by her maid (though ignorant of the contents) bequeathing all monies vested in her name in the French funds to Mrs. Courteney. Her jewels, plate, furniture, and wearing apparel she directed should be sold, and after paying certain legacies, the residue of the sum thus realized was to be given to one of the great hospitals of Paris. These legacies were to her servants, with one exception : and here came the remarkable part of the document. "The sum of four thousand francs I bequeath to Monsieur Lambert, teacher of languages, resident in the Rue du Bac, No.—, a sum so paltry that though he would take nothing from me when I was in life, he will not refuse this token of my regard from beyond the grave."

Carrlyon read these papers attentively over, when the first thrill of horror was past: and he

foresaw all the trouble and difficulty that must devolve upon him as executor to this will in a strange country. Would the law accept this document, in its informal state, as a valid one? This and other practical fears crossed Carrlyon's mind as he hurried towards the Place Vendôme; together with the disagreeable reflection that he must thus be thrown again into personal communication with Guido Lamberti. The confusion he found may be well imagined: officials of every degree from *gens d'armes* upwards crowding the rooms, gesticulating, interrogating the frightened servants, and placing their seals on everything. The painful nature of the circumstances attending the duchess's death rendered an examination of every one connected with her necessary. Those friends who had remained latest at her brilliant assemblage the previous night were called: the groom of the chambers, the last person who saw her alive, gave his deposition: but nothing of importance was elicited. And so the winter twilight crept in, and the body was taken silently away, unhonoured and alone, to its final resting place,

and solitude reigned once more in the yellow satin drawing-rooms.

There was no opposition offered to the will, and the sale of effects was fixed to take place in a week's time. But if the difficulties were less, the delays were far greater than even Carrlyon anticipated. Days elapsed, and he still found there were formulas to be filled, deeds of transfer to be signed, and other irritating impediments to the winding up of the deceased lady's affairs. He wrote to his mother-in-law of course, apprising her of Sara's bequest, and not omitting to deliver her last message to Mrs. Courteney. But he spoke as little as possible on the subject to his wife; and said nothing of the legacy to Lamberti: avoiding indeed all mention of his name. The effect the tragedy produced on her was great: for though all intercourse and anything like regard had long since ceased between them, this sudden and horrible termination to that young life recalled with painful vividness the time when she and Sara were as sisters. Her woman's instinct suggested at once the hidden cause that had led to this crime. And

then again that thought led by a natural consequence back to the terrible picture of Guido Lamberti as she last saw him.

To Guido himself Carrlyon still delayed writing; for which he had the plausible excuse, that until the sale was over, the money could not be realized out of which Lamberti's and the other legacies were to be paid. It would be sufficient to write, therefore, when he could tell him that the money was there at his disposal. But something occurred meantime to disarrange all his plans.

This something was a telegram received four or five mornings after the events I have recorded, to say that the dowager had had a seizure of some sort, and was lying dangerously ill. In less than half an hour her son was in the train.

"I have no doubt you will see me back in two or three days," he said to his wife, as he kissed her. "My mother has once or twice before alarmed me by these sort of messages, and I've found her with only a bad cold, or something of the sort. Like all people with iron constitutions, the least ailment frightens her out of her wits.

Of course I can't *trust* to that. I must go; but it's a bore just at this moment, because I wanted to wind up the affairs of that poor woman, and have done with them. By-the-by, every paper or letter you must send on immediately, remember; and—and I shouldn't wish you to be receiving visitors of any kind while I'm away, Gilda, do you understand? And you'll never think of going out, except in the carriage for a couple of hours every afternoon. On no consideration let me hear of your having walked, or gone in a fiacre. A woman in your position can't be too careful. Good-by, and keep your spirits up! You may be sure I shall get back to you again as soon as I possibly can. Perhaps when you little expect it, I shall walk in."

She had seen so little of him lately—he had been so constantly out, and so changed in his manner when at home, that she greeted even these despotic orders with pleasure, as a touch of his old self. She threw her arms round him, with a bright smile as she assured him she was resolved to keep her spirits up, even if he should

be detained longer than he expected. Not for his sake only, but for —, here she hid her soft cheek in his light brown beard; and they made a very pretty picture. And yet (O most unreasonable man!) it is not quite certain that he was altogether pleased with her ready reconciliation to his departure. You were not a clever actress like Sara, my poor Gilda: you had not the “tact,” in other words, you were too simple and truthful, to assume what was not spontaneous at the moment, or you might have averted many such shadows!

It was but a transitory gleam, after all. When he was actually gone she felt very lonely, in spite of her best efforts, and one of those inexpressible longings for her own absent mother which came over her, alas! too often now, made her seize her pen the following day, and endeavour so pour out on paper some of the thoughts which oppressed her heart. As a more truthful picture of the state of her mind than any description I could give, I here transcribe this letter.

“I am alone, dearest mother—alone in this great city! for Laurence has been called suddenly to England by his mother’s illness. Oh, how I long for you to be here, that I might lay my head on your bosom, as I used! I think all would be right then. I believe all the sad thoughts, all the gloomy forebodings which are now crowding in me, would be then driven away. But will that time ever come? Shall I ever look into those dear eyes again, and read my pardon or my condemnation? Ah! there is one of my dark shadows. When I wrote to you only four days ago, I could think of nothing but poor Sara’s horrible end, which will, I know, have shocked you terribly. I could not write of myself, though I had never greater need of your comfort and support, dearest mother! But you must listen to my selfish sorrows to-day: I must disobey you, for I feel as if the weight at my heart would crush me, if I did not write. You need not be afraid if I name Laurence; it is only to ask for your counsel. I complain of nothing. I am afraid I make him less happy

than I used, but it is no doubt my own fault, and partly perhaps my health, which prevents my sharing in his amusements. I do not doubt his love. I am sure he would never neglect me for any one else, and indeed it is *I* who always urge his going into the world, where he is so much admired and appreciated. Besides, when our child is born, I know he will find an interest in home. There is one thing—only one—I feel a kind of despair about, as regards him. I do not feel as if I inspired his *confidence*. I thought—I hoped—after all that was past, that he would implicitly trust me. And oh, dear mother! this brings me to speak of what is hanging about my heart like a stone! Guido Lamberti is here, I much fear in the greatest distress. You know he is exiled, and that the little he had was seized on and confiscated. He is *trying* to get a precarious livelihood by teaching; but I am afraid scarcely gains enough to support life! Nor is this even the worst. If his bodily strength lasted, his undaunted heart would carry him through any privations, I

believe; but alas! it is not possible to look into his face, and not perceive the terrible change which has passed over him. He is worn to a shadow; his eyes look unnaturally large and bright, and his cough—it cuts ~~one~~ to the heart to hear. You will understand from this that I *have* seen him. He called here about a week ago, under an impression that Laurence had sent him some money anonymously, which he desired to return. *We know his pride of old too well!* When I assured him that neither my husband nor I were even aware of his being in Paris, he seemed only anxious to get away as quickly as possible; his dread being, I could see, that it should be thought he came here to make known his condition. He therefore extracted a promise which I most reluctantly gave, and which I have since reproached myself with having given—that I would not mention his calling to Laurence. I would have broken that promise, in the *hope* that Laurence might do something for him, had I not known how that fatal pride would make him feel such assistance

even more bitterly than any illness or privation ! But now that Laurence is *gone*, and must be away many days at least, I begin to repent not having told him ! The thought has even crossed my mind, supposing he should have heard of this interview somehow, and misconstrue my silence ? But I do not believe he *could* do that. He would at least have spoken to me on the subject : and then I could have told him all. No, it is on our poor Guido's own account that I feel this terrible aching responsibility, which now rests upon my own weak shoulders alone. I have no means of ascertaining how he is, for I know not where he is to be found. He may be reduced to the greatest destitution before Laurence's return ! Oh ! it is horrible ! I shudder to think of it—and then no remedy ! His gaunt pale face is ever before me, so sad, and yet so proud, and I ask what will the end of it all be ? ”

Here she threw down the pen ; wearied with the very act of unburdening her overcharged heart, and meaning to finish her letter another

day. And by a curious coincidence she had scarcely written the above words when she accidentally obtained the information she so earnestly desired.

A tradesman who had left his bill some days before called with a pressing demand for its payment. The bill, Gilda knew, had been given to Carrlyon, and was probably now upon his table, amongst a heap of other papers. She went there to look for it, and almost the first thing her eye fell upon was an envelope, the handwriting upon which she could not for an instant mistake. With trembling finger she moved aside paper after paper, until she came upon the crumpled note we have read, signed Guido Lamberti, and dated Rue du Bac.

She sank down in a chair, and read it over and over again. What did it mean? Could it be, after all, that Laurence *had* sent the money? Would he not have told her? On the other hand, would Guido *return* to this persuasion without strong evidence? She found herself painfully troubled to answer these questions. But one thing was evident. Whether cognizant of Guido's position

before or not, whether by a generous impulse, her husband, or some other person, had tried to assist him, it was impossible, after that letter, that Laurence should take any overt part in helping him. Did that lessen her responsibility? However the world might answer this question, the tender, loving woman's heart answered, No! Could she think of him as she last saw him; could she be haunted by that face day and night, and not stretch out her hand now that she knew where he was? Her whole nature gave a passionate denial to so cold-blooded and monstrous a supposition.

It was too late to send Marietta that day. The following morning, however, her trusty little messenger set out to the Rue du Bac, to obtain what information she could concerning the Italian teacher.

CHAPTER X.

FIVE days, five days of rapidly decreasing strength, and now the end is drawing near.

The evening of the day that Sara took her final leave of him in this world, Guido, after writing to Lord Carrlyon, again ruptured a blood-vessel. The old woman who tended him was at her wit's end. She sent for the little apothecary hard-by, but he did little more than shake his head, recommending quiet and good food. He saw that the man was doomed: the loss of blood had reduced his strength to its lowest ebb.

And in cruel mockery, as it seemed, of his fruitless efforts for employment all these months, when employment *might* have saved him, he

received instructions from a publisher the very next morning to commence an important translation which would be well paid. The poor fellow sat up in his bed propped by pillows for some hours every day, and worked as long as it was possible for him to hold a pen.

"It is no use," he said at last, as he sank back. "It comes too late."

He took, or tried to take, what the good woman brought him (and it was marvellous how far that napoleon spread itself with her care and judgment!): but from habits of long abstinence, the stomach was now too weak to digest much food. After swallowing a few mouthfuls, he would return the basin of soup, greatly to her discomfiture, and she would say angrily,—

"*Tiens, mon enfant*—if you have been bred upon truffles, you may turn up your nose at this; but I'll be bound you never got a better potage for breakfast at home; pure and wholesome, and strong, too!"

"No doubt, *ma mère*, it is excellent; but I have no appetite."

"But how do you expect to live, if you do not eat?"

"I do not expect to live: I grow hourly weaker. God wills it so, *ma mère*, and you know," he added, with a smile, "I do not leave very much behind me to regret. When I am gone you will find five francs and a little gold cross in that box,—which are yours. The cross was my mother's; and I have called *you* by that name lately: you will keep it for my sake. My sword and pistols, and the few books you see, will fetch something—enough to pay for my burial and this last fortnight's rent. And, *ma mère*, there is a favour I would still ask of you, after I am gone. Let this glove be buried with me. See: I have always carried it here next my heart. Let it remain there still."

"I am an old fool," muttered *ma mère* to herself, as she wiped her eyes with the corner of her apron. "For I feel just as if it were really my own son. Ah! if *this* one had only been in a good shop, like the *Maison de Lille*! That glove, indeed! What is the love of these

fine ladies worth, when they leave him here to die, with only an old woman like me near him? If he had some of their fine wines and jellies even now, who knows but he might recover? That thick-veiled lady who left me the money, why has she never called since? I have only three francs left—if I did but know where to find her! *Ah! mon Dieu*, it is shocking, it is inhuman to let him die so!”

And the old woman hobbled out of the room to finish her cry unrestrained below. The short winter twilight had closed rapidly in. Presently, the frosty sharp-cut moon rose over the high Paris roofs and chimneys, and shone full into the garret window. The dying man raised himself on his elbow and looked long and wistfully at that strong pure light ruling over the darkened city. The cries of the closing day had not yet ceased. The grind of carts and carriages, the shouts of street-hawkers, the nasal twang of organs, still mounted to that garret, blent into one indistinguishable roar. To the imagination of him who heard them, as he looked at that calm clear light,

they sounded like the far-off cries and struggles of a life that would soon be at sleep for ever, while the glorious light which had risen upon his soul should shine undimmed through the darkest hour.

A marvellous change had been wrought in his inward thoughts during the five days he had lain there. Since the slow, sure conviction had dawned upon him that Death—"Death the friend"—was at hand, a veil seemed to have fallen from him. He started to find how different was the outline of all mere human towers of strength against the eternal sky! As he lay there now, with the moon shining down upon him, he buried his face in his hands: and if we dare reveal the secret recesses of a soul whose deep-drawn fervent praise and prayer was heard by no mortal ear, his thoughts may have framed themselves thus:

"My eyes are open, and my sin is before me. The pride, the vain-glory of a mortal who hath foolishly thought he could stand alone in thy world—is there aught so hateful in thy sight as this? But thou art merciful. I thank thee that

thou hast brought me low. In my strength thou wert hidden from mine eyes by the thick mist of superstition men spread before thy glorious face. In my weakness those eyes thou hast opened to see thee as thou art—infinite in mercy and wisdom. O thou who dwellest neither in heaven nor in earth, who pervadest all creation, from whom all that is true, and wise, and beautiful doth come; who, in thy inscrutable wisdom, permittest evil to exist for a time upon this earth, men ignorantly worship thee as a God of Revenge to be conciliated by vain sacrifice, fasting, and oblation! Thou hast stricken me down; thou hast taken from me, one by one, each hope that held me to life; and now thou hast robbed me of that pride wherein I boasted of my self-dependence. I am humbled in the dust! Yet not in wrath but in pity hast thou thus dealt with me. I worship in thee a God of Mercy. Had mine own right arm gotten me this victory, should I have turned to thee? Thou hast taught me that vain is the strength of man. I stand on the brink of the grave, and where is my pride? the stubborn

arrogance of my heart that opposed a dread of the contempt of my fellow men to sympathy, to love, to the blessed gifts which shall endure beyond all time? Thou art present in the least of all thy works. How much more, then, in the love that binds thy creatures together upon earth! In my blindness I put away from me the cup of love thou heldest to my lips. Too late, O Father! too late, I acknowledge how mistaken is the pride that separates two of thy creatures whom thou hast ordained for each other! Yet, through absence and trial, though silent and unrecognised, in the secret recesses of my soul this passion has guarded me from all lower affections men falsely call 'love.' Thereby, I know it is of thee. I thank thee for it now that life is fast ebbing away: and I thank thee too for that belief which hath risen up slowly in my soul, like yonder moon into the night, guiding the wanderer in darkness to the skirts of everlasting morn! that belief in a future and higher state of being where all creeds, all differences, all sorrows, all human stains, shall be swept away, and love shall be made perfect,

and joy shall be made pure, and superstition shall hide its face, and we shall know thee as thou art, and looking back upon this lower life, shall praise the mercy and truth that led us over that dark and narrow bridge, into the light of thine eternal glory!"

At noon the following day, Marietta ran into her mistress's room. Her face was pale, and with all an Italian's vehement gesticulation, she cried out,

"He is dying, signora! The apothecary says he cannot last the day! and the old woman who is with him says—oh, signora, it is horrible!—she says it is *want of food*—that he is dying of hunger, and that his friends have let him die."

Gilda had started to her feet, and was looking at her with a stony gaze of horror. Then she suddenly pressed her hand before her eyes, and a low groan burst from her.

"Oh, my God! and it is I—I who have killed him! All these days—all these days—and I might have saved him! Dying and alone! Oh, horrible! But it may not be true; it may not be too late—

Marietta!" she dropped her hands, and her brow was knit with a sudden determination, as she grasped her maid's arm: "Run—run—get a fiacre—not a moment's delay. I should not have the heart of a woman to let him—to let any man die thus!"

While the little Italian ran out, Lady Carrlyon nearly pulled the bell down in her agitation, ordering the astonished waiter, when he came, to fill a basket with wine, meat, and whatever nourishment was available at a moment's notice. Her trembling fingers had scarcely strength to tie the strings of her bonnet and cloak, as she hurried downstairs.

CHAPTER XI.



LORD CARRLYON reached London by the mail-train on Monday night. He found the dowager *very* slightly indisposed, as he had anticipated, but in a great state of excitement relative to the change of ministry which had been imminent on Saturday, but which on Monday no longer admitted of a doubt. Now, she built all her hopes of her son's "getting something" on this change. She had therefore adopted the very characteristic ruse of appealing to Laurence's filial feelings in order to bring him across the Channel, as she knew his habitual indolence and reluctance to act decisively in such matters.

But Carrlyon chose to be very angry with his mother, and it was in vain that she tied up her face and lay on a sofa, and assured him she had been

very, very unwell. He could hardly be persuaded to promise that he would seek an interview with the embryo Prime Minister, who was a distant cousin, before returning to Paris the following day.

When that day came, he found, as is always the case, so much to do, that he just missed the mail train. He was resolved to go on however, and sleep at Dover. He had not written to Gilda; intending to surprise her at breakfast the following morning. Now, however, he could not reach her till the middle of the day. He was uncomfortable, dissatisfied with himself—with his mother, with the Prime Minister, with everybody. The Minister, though a cousin, had politely pointed out that a man who lived abroad, and kept sedulously aloof from public affairs, could hardly expect to be entrusted with the important post Carrlyon had asked for. And Carrlyon could not himself but feel that the frivolous life he had been leading unfitted him for any career of constant and laborious work. He was annoyed; his vanity mortified; his temper irritated by a fruitless

journey into which he had been decoyed: and over and above all, his nervous temperament agitated by ill-defined anxiety concerning Gilda. He ought to have spoken to her calmly, kindly, but resolutely before he left. He was a fool not to have done so. There was some mistake—he was sure of it—which she would clear up; and something very like the actual truth did in fact occur to Carrlyon. Still he was tormented by *doubt*. That Caliston blood! Could the veins in which it flowed be ever purified from the poison which was so fatal an inheritance? Now oftener than ever the thought recurred, in spite of his best efforts to drive it away. And in this frame of mind he reached Paris.

It was early in the afternoon when he drove up to the hotel. There were a couple of waiters lounging under the archway with napkins under their arms.

“How is madame?” cried Laurence, as he jumped out of the carriage. “She is not ill?”

“No, milord, she is out.”

“Out? when did she go out?”

“Half-an-hour ago, in a fiacre, with her maid.”

Carrylon bit his lip: then said with an affectation of indifference—

“So she did not wait for her carriage? Do you happen to know what took her out so early?”

“No, milord. Miladi took wine and other things with her, and I heard her tell the driver to go as fast as he could to the Rue du Bac.”

Carrylon, in a calm voice, desired the man to take his things upstairs. His face was deadly pale, and he set his teeth hard. Then turning abruptly round he walked out into the street. He hailed a fiacre, and jumped into it. Yes! he would follow her: he would track her out; he would not stand this state of horrible doubt and suspense any longer. There might be some mistake, and she be innocent, but if his worst suspicions were confirmed—if she proved to have been false to him, by G—d! he would not spare her, he would show her no mercy, no! not even for the sake of the child she was about to bear.

The man's excitement was so great that he

clenched his fists till the nails entered the flesh. He shrieked out to the driver to double his pace. He could hardly sit still: those few minutes seemed hours of agony to him who was inside that jingling little *citadine*.

At last it pulled up: and again he leapt out.

There was no one in the porter's lodge but a little child, who was left to mind the *cordon*, and who knew nothing. Carrlyon sprang upstairs. On the fourth landing he found the old portress, seated on the top step, and stifling her sobs with her apron. With innate delicacy she had left the room, not to intrude on those, who, as she believed, had more right to watch the dying man. But she had got no farther than the door; there, on the landing, she could give way to her grief comparatively without restraint, and there Carrlyon found her.

"Is any one with Monsieur Lamberti?" he mastered himself to ask with tolerable composure.

"*Oui*," sobbed the old woman, "*oui, monsieur, cette dame y est.*"

"What lady? Do you know her, then?"

"The same who has been here twice before ; but ah ! she comes too late ! You, too, if you are his friend—stay ! now I recognize monsieur. I kept your secret, but you should have come again, you are too late now, too late," and putting up her finger knowingly, through her tears, good old soul, "you understand that just at this moment you might be *de trop*. You had better not disturb them. It is the last time, poor things, that——"

"Yes ! the last time," said Carrlyon hoarsely, as he brushed past her.

Ah ! *ma mere*, your mistake in confusing this veiled lady with the one whose face you never saw, has only tended to hurry on fatal events which could hardly have been averted !

He flung the door open, and there remained motionless. Between him and the bed, so that its occupant was hidden, was Gilda, her face buried in her hands. Marietta was stooping over the pillow, but both women started as the door opened, and then Gilda, with a faint cry, ran towards her husband.

He waved her back, and husband and wife stood opposite each other for a second or two, till he said, in a voice hardly audible with passion,—

“So, Lady Carrlyon, I return to find you here. I am thankful, at least, that my eyes should be opened!”

“Opened? Oh, Laurence, I am miserable and suffering as it is; don’t look at me thus! You don’t know what I have gone through, or you would not add to my agony and self-reproach by suspecting——”

“*Suspecting?* I admire your choice of words. I do not *suspect*. As to your self-reproach, I am glad you have some sense of shame left!”

“Laurence! Laurence! You know not what you are saying! For God’s sake, don’t speak thus, and at such a moment too! Dear Laurence, listen to me.”

“I have listened long enough. I am not to be duped any more,” he exclaimed vehemently.

“Duped? Oh, my God, Laurence, is it possible?” she gasped, “can you think that——”

"I think that this man is your *paramour*, Lady Carrlyon! You have had repeated clandestine interviews with him, both here and at your own home."

She caught at the table near her. A look of horror and indignation shot from those eyes, which Carrlyon never forgot.

"God forgive you for those false and cruel words!" She panted for breath, and pressed her hand to her side, while a ghastly change stole over her face. "You will be sorry for them one day, Carrlyon. You will remember them long after I am gone! Thank God, *he* did not hear you! *He is dead!* and his last moments were peace—yes, peace!"

She sank back into Marietta's arms. Upon the bed behind her, his eyes already closed, his emaciated hands folded on his breast, lay all that remained of what was once the proud Guido Lamberti. The expression of the face did, indeed, betoken an end of untroubled calm.

Carrlyon walked up to the bed, and looked on what lay there for a moment or two in silence.

As he stood thus, with a throng of conflicting emotions in his heart, may not a certain envy for that rest, that calm security his rival seemed to be enjoying, have come over him? The vain, mercurial, yet kindly man of the world, easy of impression, hot-headed, and as quickly repentant, could not gaze at those hollow cheeks and sunken eyes over which the lids had closed for ever—the ruined tenement of what he remembered so full of noble manhood, without a thrill of awe and compassion, even though the object of it was the man he believed to be most inimical to his own happiness. But the vials of his jealous wrath were emptied now and flung aside; Remorse, on her sable wing, was already hurrying towards him.

Ma mère had come into the room, seeing that the lady was ill; and both the good woman and Marietta were busily engaged in trying to restore her to animation. As *ma mère* rubbed one hand, she could not resist exclaiming, in a low voice, to herself,—

“*Mon Dieu! Pauvre garçon, il-y-en-avait deux,*

alors. See! the other had dark eyes, and this one is fair as a child."

Carrlyon had walked up, and was standing beside her as she muttered this;—

"If monsieur has anything to do with this lady," said the old woman, suddenly looking up, "I recommend him to get her home as fast as possible. I am an old mother myself. This sudden shock——"

He stooped down and lifted her in his arms like a little child. He stopped to ask no question: he spoke no other word; but silently, swiftly, with a troubled brow and trembling lip, he bore her downstairs, followed by the affrighted Marietta.

* * * * *

At twelve o'clock that night Lady Carrlyon was prematurely delivered of a boy. The child, however, though small, was pronounced to be healthy; and the anxiety of the physicians was concentrated on the mother. Her husband was unremitting in his attention: he scarcely left her bedside day or night, but her prostration was such that she lay apparently in a stupor, unconscious

of his presence. The doctors said there had been some shock to her nervous system, which it had not recovered; and as the days went by it became evident to every one—to that miserable husband last of all—that she was gradually sinking away.

She recognized him once before she died. She opened her eyes in the night, and they wandered vaguely round the room, as if looking for something. The nurse, at Carrlyon's desire, brought her the baby. She looked wistfully into its little face, as though she would have read its future there; then pressed it with her feeble lips. Her eyes almost instantly afterwards kindled with a faint ray of life as they met those of her husband. She could not speak, but she looked back at the child, and then again at him; and he understood her. As she saw that he did so, a smile flickered over Gilda's pale lips; and to this token of trust and of forgiveness—the last she was able to give—the widowed husband still clings, whenever he thinks of his departed wife.

I have little left to tell, and I will say that in as few words as possible.

For a time Carrlyon's passionate grief almost approached insanity. He accused himself of being his wife's murderer; and it required the physician's solemn assertions that her death was the result of natural causes consequent on childbirth, to mitigate the violence of his poignant remorse. The discovery of that unfinished letter to her mother, with the touching expression of her sorrows and difficulties, moved him to fresh and unavailing self-reproach. He had never really known the angel in his house till she had been taken from him.

Ten years have passed since then.

Lord Carrlyon is not *yet* married again, but is devoted to the education of his child. The boy is a fine, handsome creature; and, fortunately for his future happiness, perhaps, wholly unlike his mother or maternal grandmother. It is impossible to be reminded of any one but Carrlyon himself as you look in the child's face. The dowager adores him; the servants all spoil

him: there is no one but the father to exercise any wholesome influence and control. But he has not forgotten the errors of his own education, the faults and follies (no one can discern them more clearly than himself, in certain moods) consequent on a pampered youth. Above all, he has not forgotten the solemn trust those dying eyes reposed in him. No! so far as he can, it shall be his care to train her boy in the fear of God, in the love of truth and virtue, in perseverance and industry, in abnegation of self. He shall not be a mere man of pleasure; a dilettante of the arts, a pet of society; he shall be a working man in a profession for some years. All this the anxious father plans in his head, as he watches day by day the child's growth and promise. Whether those plans will be carried out, whether that promise will be fulfilled, who shall say?

Lord Carrlyon then may be supposed to be "a sadder and a wiser man." The effect of his wife's death upon him was no doubt great; his self-accusation bitter, his unavailing regrets poig-

nant and lasting. To this very day he cannot allude to her, to the sunny days of their early married life, to the many associations connected with Italy, without emotion. But early habits are not easily changed. The character is exceptional which, after a man has reached his full moral stature, suffers material alteration from any single circumstance in life. I am not aware that Carrlyon has set to work to achieve any greatness that should raise him above the adventitious advantages of birth. He is identified with no particular cause; he devotes his energies to no reform, or other practical result that I ever heard of. He has almost given up painting, and has become so fastidious in the matter of society, that it is esteemed a rare honour when he submits with languid tolerance to the adulation of a country house—the female portion of it, that is to say. For it is natural that mothers, whether “Belgravian” or not, should feel anxious for their daughters to shine to particular advantage whenever that excellent, charming, accomplished man, Lord Carrlyon, is by; and it always

amuses me to watch the flutter of anxiety into which his arrival throws the whole brood. But, hitherto, as I have said, he has escaped them, in spite of the dowager's excellent advice, and kind recommendation of three or four suitable *partis* every year. Some women think him supercilious; but they all remark that he is invariably kind to children, and to those who appear to be suffering, or slighted. Especially noticeable is it in a hard man of the world, how angry the ordinary chaffing scandal among men makes him, and how warmly he takes up the defence of any woman of whom defence is possible.

Is there any particular tree you can distinctly remember in your childhood, and have you seen it again after a long lapse of years? The bole is the same, there is the same twist in the main branch, but time has wrought a change in the sky-outline. For here the current of its sap was stayed, and here the cold wind turned its topmost boughs: so that, to a casual observer, it scarcely looks the same tree. Such a change, and no more, have years and circumstances effected in Carrlyon.

It only remains for me to speak of one other person, in whose fate the reader of these pages may feel some interest or curiosity. Mrs. Courteney, that worn, fragile woman, whose life seemed hanging on a thread eleven years ago, still lives. It has pleased the Giver of life and death to spare her, while she has seen all she held most dear on earth depart. In the early days of his bereavement, stung with remorse, her son-in-law wrote to entreat that Gilda's mother would come and take permanent charge of the child. He was perfectly sincere when he said there was no one living in whom he could place such confidence. But Mrs. Courteney did not allow her feelings to blind her to all that such an arrangement would entail. She had had the fortitude to banish herself from her own daughter's society : she would not be an element of discord in this child's life. She foresaw that when the first season of his grief was past, and that Carrlyon returned to old habits and associations, above all, if the dowager should conceive any affection for the boy, Mrs. Courteney's presence would be a *gêne*, if nothing worse,

and might imperil her grandchild's future happiness.

"Believe me," she wrote, "it is better that the boy should learn to look to *you* in all his joys and troubles, that he should be dependent on you alone from his very earliest years. A chain will thus be riveted which will stand the test of time, and an influence established far beyond that of parental authority. This, I believe, would be our darling's wish, were she alive. Much as she might desire me to be near her child, she would much more ardently desire that you should be his sole guide and guardian. I might use many other good arguments to combat those so warmly urged by you, but I feel that this one is sufficient. The remaining sand of my life must run out here, Laurence, in the land of my adoption. If you will come, and bring the child to see me, it will be a ray of sunshine in my solitary existence. But do not try and shake my resolution. *You did so once*, and God ordained that I should take up my cross again. Unless He points out some clear line of duty elsewhere, I must continue

to bear that cross of expiation here, until He sees fit that I should lay it down."

And so she bides her time, in faith and charity : in hope and patience : self-denying unto the end, her hands slacken not in God's service of love and mercy here, while she looks forward to the blessed future, when tears shall be wiped from every eye, and sin and sorrow be unknown.

THE END.

65, Cornhill, London,
February, 1862.

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